NINTENDO POWER

Rayman Origins • E3 Report • Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D • Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D • Ace Combat 3D • Cave Story 3D • Solatorobo • Skylanders

269

JULY 2011

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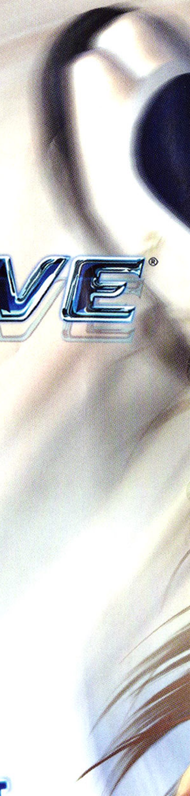

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Dimensions

"Looks damn good…gorgeous for a handheld."
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*" The fighting was fast, fluid, and accurate,
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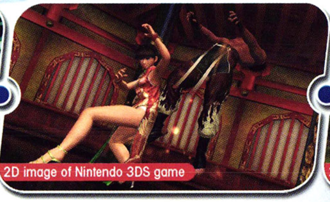
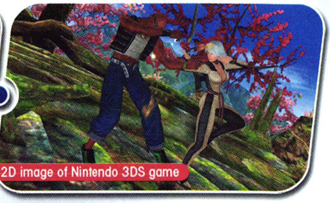
2D image of Nintendo 3DS game


2D image of Nintendo 3DS game


2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

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2D image of Nintendo 3DS game

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TEEN
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ESRB

Blood
Mild Language
Partial Nudity
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence

NINTENDO POWER

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Rayman is finally back in action in Rayman Origins! Get all the details on this visually stunning four-player platformer that's making its way to Wii and Nintendo 3DS.

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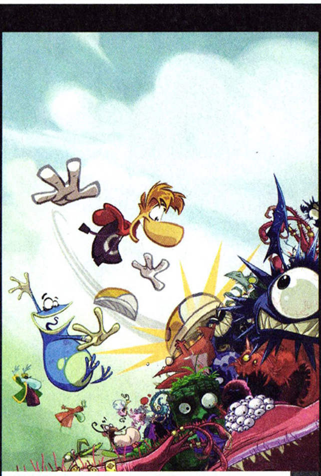

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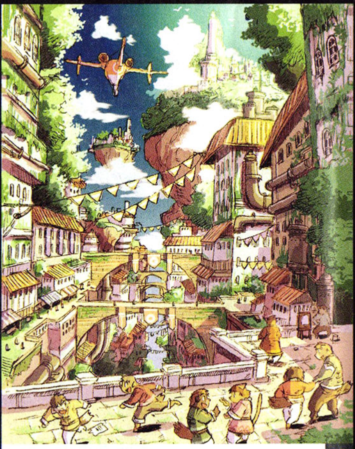

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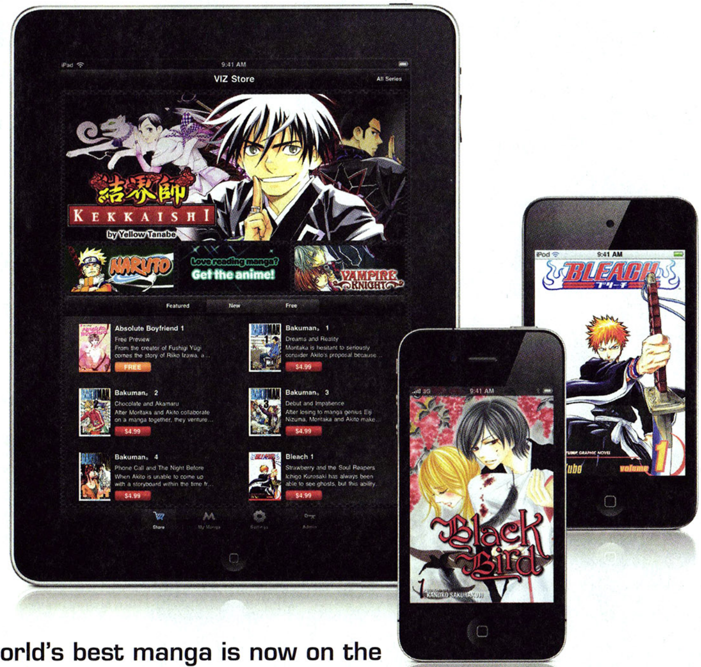
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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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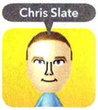
Pulse

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year



Can't we just go ahead and make E3 a national holiday? It should be against the law for hardcore Nintendo fans to be stuck at work or school while new games are being announced by the boothload. For gamers, no other time of the year is more thrilling than those three days in early June when the future of our beloved hobby bursts into being before our very eyes. I can't think of anything comparable for any other form of entertainment, and I'm so glad that the show has returned to its former glory since it nearly faded away not long ago. Even for those watching real-time online coverage of the show from home, there's something magical about repeatedly refreshing the browser window to see one cool new game after another pop onto the computer screen, and there are few things more exciting than watching the live streaming video of Nintendo's annual pre-E3 press conference. From the 2004 teaser trailer of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess to the surprise 2010 returns of Donkey Kong Country and Kid Icarus to this year's new Wii U console debut, Nintendo's E3 shindigs provide moments that die-hard fans will never forget. Fans may not be able to attend the industry-only trade show, but make no mistake: E3 is really for them.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

EPIC REVIEW! The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D

NINTENDO POWER

COVER 2 OF 2

CLASSIC REVIVALS:
- SHINOBI
- MEGA MAN LEGENDS 3

10 YEARS OF GAME BOY ADVANCE PG. 64

The Blue Blur speeds onto Nintendo 3DS in an anniversary event 20 years in the making:

SONIC GENERATIONS

V268 JUNE 2011

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while tagging a jillion showgoers with StreetPass at E3. But first, this month's special letter request: what did you think of Nintendo's showing at E3? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

All Part of the Job

At first I was skeptical of Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors, but after reading the many positive articles about it in your magazine, I decided that I wanted it...badly. I got the game and spent the next three or four weeks playing it, until I finally got all the endings. And although it was an amazing game, I wasn't quite satisfied. So I researched everything from Locke's Socks to Ship of Theseus, morphogenic fields to prosopagnosia (look it up, it's all real!). I read multiple articles, took notes, and pondered ideas for many hours until I realized that I was obsessed. Yet the little voices in my head still screamed for more, which brought me to this conclusion: 999 *must* have a sequel. **—KK FEATHERST**

Sorry KK, but there's no word of a sequel yet, and my gut tells me that it's a longshot. But I'm thrilled that we got you to give the game a chance. That's one of the biggest reasons for Nintendo Power to exist, to put players in touch with great games that they might not have otherwise been exposed to. Now go back and play Elite Beat Agents, Rhythm Heaven, and ExciteBots!

A Great Game Is Never Too Old

When the last page of Vol. 267 stated that Sonic's 20th anniversary was imminent, I felt the need to experience the hedgehog's classic games firsthand. I quickly went out and bought a Genesis along with Sonic 2. My mind was blown. I had vastly underestimated the power of Sega. Without Nintendo Power, I would not have experienced this. Thanks! **—MIKE L.**

Wow, so many people seem to be discovering fun games this month because of us—I love it! While a lot of classic games remain great only in our nostalgic memories, a few are so well-constructed that they've withstood the test of time. Sonic's Genesis titles definitely fit into the latter category.

While the Blue Blur's original games for Sega Genesis started to hit stores a full two decades ago, they hold up very well.

I was looking through last month's list of top 10 GBA games, and I noticed that Golden Sun wasn't there. I was about to start screaming when I noticed Steve Thomason's Writer's Block comment about how he thought Golden Sun and its sequel deserved to be on the list. Thanks to him, my parents stayed asleep and I stayed a loving fan of NP. **—AMER GHALI**

a DECADE ADVANCED

It's been 10 years since the Game Boy Advance stormed onto the scene. We celebrate with a look back at the system's 10 best games and a whole lot more.

10 Advance Wars

9 Metroid Fusion

Anything Goes

I agree with Sling Shot Dave's letter—cheating is in the eye of the beholder. I do everything I can to gain an advantage, from dunking foes to their doom with my slinging shells to snaking at the lake. One time I even devised a special "shortcut" for Rainbow Road in Mario Kart 64: wherever the terrain slopes, make an immediate left turn and hop to shave as much as a minute off your track time. Is this cheating? Not as far as I'm concerned. In Vol. 193, Satoru Takizawa, the art director on The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, said, "Our goal is to create a miniature landscape garden...in which players can get in touch with their surroundings." I am just utilizing what is in the garden. **—TANOOKI JUMPMAN**

Marth

Sister, what is happening?

Portable Prayers Answered

I am really happy that a Nintendo handheld has Virtual Console games. Finally, Nintendo has heard my prayers and I will at last be able to play all of the Game Boy and Game Boy Color games that I missed! Also, the future inclusion of Game Gear games is such a great addition that I will never, ever question Nintendo's will again. **—NOSFERATU**

Respect Is Due

I sincerely believe that the Fire Emblem franchise is not getting the attention it deserves. I have been with the series ever since I first met Roy and Marth in Super Smash Bros. Melee—which was the duo's first appearance outside of Japan—and since then I've enjoyed every Fire Emblem game released in the US. With amazing gameplay, beautiful soundtracks, superb storylines, and outstanding character development, Fire Emblem has what it takes to be on top, yet many people have only heard about the series (and judged it) through its characters' cameos in the Super Smash Bros. series. That is kind of depressing to me. **—TIKIWITHTHEBINDINGBLADE**

To anyone who still knows Roy and Marth only from Super Smash Bros. Melee: try Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon for Nintendo DS!

Making the Most of Every Step

I had the best idea while I was trying to earn Play Coins the other day: exercise using Wii Fit Plus with my Nintendo 3DS in my pocket! That way, I can earn steps for my puppy in nintendogs + cats, earn Play Coins for use in Find Mii, get Fit Credits in Wii Fit Plus, and burn calories! Pretty ingenious, huh? **—ROBOTORTOISE**

What, you're not also earning Watts with the Pokéwalker pedometer? Slacker.

International Intrigue

I wanted to thank you guys for that awesome write-up of Pandora's Tower in Vol. 267; the game looks wonderfully disturbing. It's always a notable occasion when Nintendo publishes a game with a darker style—such as The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask and Super Metroid—so I really hope this one comes stateside! **—RUFUS**

Glad you enjoyed the article! Whether or not every overseas game makes it to our shores, we've always thought it worthwhile to look at what gamers around the world will be playing. We'll let you know if Pandora's Tower ever gets the nod for a US release, and we'll be sure to keep an eye out for the next hot international prospect.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I always treat boss levels like real life, so I never play them out of fear of dying! Do you have any suggestions to help me out? **—CUTEBOO**

The Hoff says: I think the only way you'll get over this issue is if you turn it on its head and start treating real life as if it were a video game.* Start with something easy, like tossing banana peels out the rear windows of your parents' car, then try punching over garbage cans and eating whatever delicious food you find inside. After that, chop down all your neighbors' shrubs in the hope of nabbing a few Rupees. Only after that should you go to the zoo and stomp on the turtles. (If anyone asks, tell them they were attacking you.)

****Disclaimer: Nintendo Power does not endorse the above actions, and if you attempt them, the Hoff takes no responsibility for resultant legal or hospital fees. In fact, it's generally a good idea to never listen to the Hoff about anything.***

If I could have Nintendo announce anything, it would be a R.O.B. remake for Wii. I wasn't around when R.O.B. was out for the NES, and I believe this would be a stellar way to reintroduce him to the current generation while making older gamers feel nostalgic. **—MICHAEL M.**

If you could have Nintendo announce anything you want at E3, what would it be? (Question asked before E3.)

If I had to choose one thing to be announced at E3, it would be an AR mode for the N3DS Mario Kart! Wouldn't it be awesome to throw shells at real turtles, drive on water, or just cruise around your own backyard? If this happened, I would blow half the money I'm saving for a computer on the new Mario Kart and a Nintendo 3DS faster than you could say, "Here we go!" **—ASTROTHESTICKMAN**

Oh man, where do I start? The grand return of F-Zero! New EarthBound and Star Fox games! The return of Ice Climbers and StarTropics! **—JOHN O.**

Nintendo vs. Capcom: Super Smash Brotherhood. Game description not necessary. **—ALT**

If I could have Nintendo announce anything at E3, it would be a brain implant that could be plugged into a game system so that you're actually *in* the game! **—KELLEN M.**

I would love to see a remake of Super Mario RPG for Nintendo 3DS. The Super NES original has been my favorite game since its release, and I would enjoy seeing what could be done with an updated version. **—TYLER B.**

I hope to see a new F-Zero game since the franchise has been lying dormant for eight years. Metroid had a similar hiatus between Super Metroid and Metroid Prime/Metroid Fusion. Those games are some of the best I've ever played, and I hope that F-Zero follows in their footsteps. **—RYAN O.**

If Nintendo is going to announce a new console at E3, I would like to have some reassurance that I won't have to leave any saved data behind when I put away my Wii. It was fun collecting every trophy, sticker, and album in Super Smash Bros. Brawl, but I'm not sure I could find the time to do it again. **—INTENSE TABUU**

I'd pick a new Super Smash Bros. game for Nintendo's next home console and throw in some new third-party characters. Who's up for seeing Neku from The World Ends With You face off against happy, bubbly Kirby? **—REIDW**

I cast my vote for a prequel to The World Ends With You so we could find out more about (minor spoiler alert) Joshua's rise to power. **—MAJORAPROPHET**

Super Smash Bros. for Nintendo 3DS...no, Mother 3 finally getting a US release...no, a new Yoshi's Island game, preferably in the style of New Super Mario Bros. Wii. That would be sheer awesome! **—SIR DASHING**

If I could have Nintendo announce anything at this year's E3, it would be a new system called the Nintendo 10DS. It would be just like Nintendo 3DS, but have 10 screens. **—KINGDOM HEARTS TIME**

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

SNAKE EATERS

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LICENSING MANAGER **Frances Wall Jha**

BUSINESS
VICE PRESIDENT—GAMES **Kelley Corten - 650.745.9225**
VP OF SALES AND MARKETING **Rachelle Considine – rconsidine@futureus.com - 650.238.2505**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTEGRATED SALES **Nate Hunt – nhunt@futureus.com - 415.269.5408**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR **Isaac Ugay – iugay@futureus.com - 949.305.0767**
REGIONAL SALES MANAGER **Rachel Campos – rcampos@futureus.com - 650.745.9207**
ACCOUNT MANAGER **Arthur St. Germain - astgermain@futureus.com - 650.238.2571**
DETROIT CONSUMER MANAGER **Alan Dickinson – alandmedia@comcast.net - 248.792.2408**
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR **Heidi Hapin – hhapin@futureus.com**
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER **Andrea Recio-Ang – arecio-ang@futureus.com**
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE **Ashley Kardel – akardel@futureus.com**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Michael Hollister**
PRODUCTION MANAGER **Larry Briseno**
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Suite 400, South San
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FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
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NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
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Nintendo Power Customer Care
P.O. Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270
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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

6 OUT OF 10

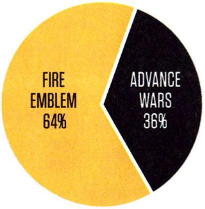
WOULD TURN INTO AN OCTOROK TO VISIT HYRULE

MOST EXCITED FOR NINTENDO 3DS eSHOP VIRTUAL CONSOLE TITLES

50%

MOST EXCITED FOR eSHOP 3D CLASSICS

WHICH SIDE WINS IN WAR?



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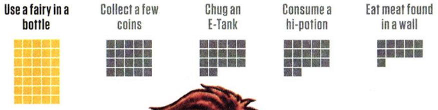
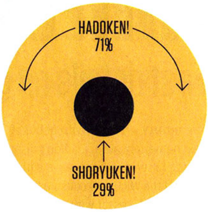


RYU

IS YOUR FAVORITE OF THE EIGHT ORIGINAL WORLD WARRIORS

Ryu 47% · **Chun-Li** 18% · **Ken** 9% · **Blanka** 9% · **Guile** 6%
Dhalsim 4% · **Zangief** 4% · **E. Honda** 3%



Which Nintendo console launch would you time-travel to?

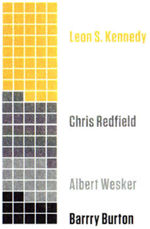
31%

NINTENDO 64

26% **NES**
22% **Super NES**
11% **Wii**
10% **Nintendo GameCube**

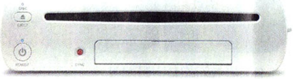
LEON S. KENNEDY

IS THE TRUE LEADING MAN OF THE RESIDENT EVIL SERIES



Nintendo's Next Console

First details on gaming's next big leap forward



THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED debut of Nintendo's next home console at E3 didn't disappoint those hoping to see another system with a shocking twist. Dubbed the Wii U, the console lives up to its revolutionary predecessor with yet another evolutionary leap forward in video game controllers.

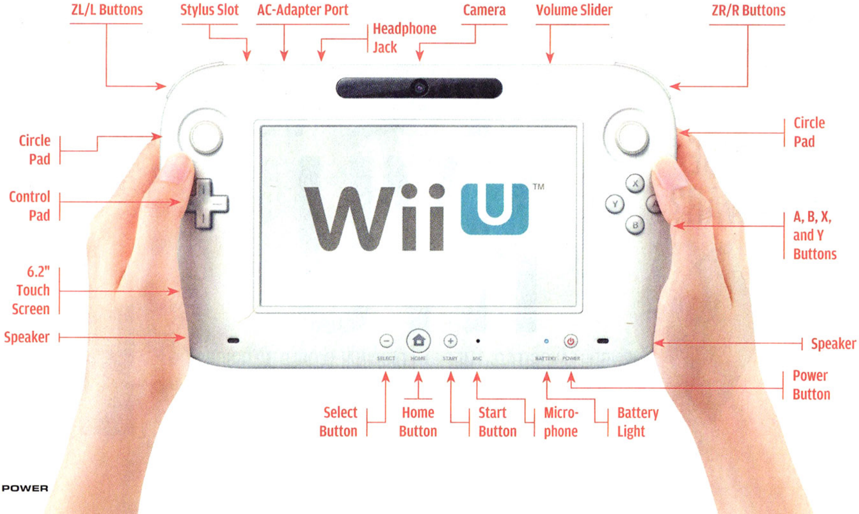
Wii U may seem as unusual a choice for a console name as Wii once did, but it hints at everything die-hard gamers have been clamoring for. Whereas Wii was intended to mean "we"—as in, a video game system that we can all enjoy together—the addition of "U" signals a deeper focus on the details that have come to define the ultimate single-player experience, such as state-of-the-art 1080p HD graphics, robust online features, and a renewed focus on the kinds of mature, hyperrealistic experiences that Nintendo players have often had to look elsewhere for. With Wii U, Nintendo aims to produce the first console that will appeal equally to the most demanding gamers and to their casual-gaming friends and family.

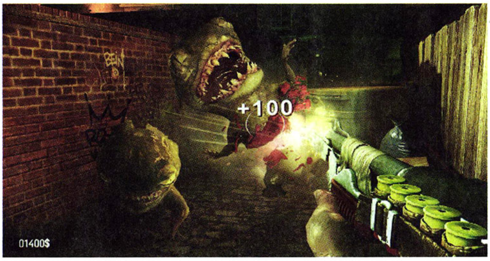
The Wii U system's most noteworthy feature is its tabletlike controller. With a 6.2" high-resolution touch screen that spans most of its surface, the device will allow you to play games in all-new ways. Additionally, the controller incorporates two analog Circle Pads; a Control Pad; and buttons (for traditional controls; a gyro sensor and an accelerometer (for motion controls); and a built-in camera, speaker, and microphone.

Some uses of the controller seem obvious; it could display an inventory screen or a map, for example. Other uses are more innovative: it will be possible in many cases to play Wii U games using only the screen on the controller, so you can turn off your TV or watch television programming while you play. You can also use the screen as a personal display in multiplayer games; Nintendo has shown tech demos in which one player uses the Wii U controller while other players use Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers. (The Wii U is fully backward-compatible with all Wii games and accessories.) Other uses include raising and moving the controller like a shield to block enemy attacks, or placing it on the ground so you can see a virtual golf ball that you then swing at with a Wii Remote.

Though Nintendo hasn't shown any actual Wii U games, company representatives have announced that new titles from the Pikmin and Super Smash Bros. series are in development. (A version of the next Super Smash Bros. game will also be made for the Nintendo 3DS handheld.) Third-party publishers have pledged significant support; titles on the way include Tekken (from Namco Bandai); Batman: Arkham City (from WB Interactive); Aliens: Colonial Marines (from Sega); Darksiders II (from THQ); Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge (from Tecmo); Dirt (from Codemasters); and Assassin's Creed, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online, Killer Freaks from Outer Space, an unnamed Raving Rabbids game, and a family sports title (all from Ubisoft).

No price or release date has been set for the Wii U, but it should be out sometime between April 2012 and the end of that year. —**CHRIS H. & CHRIS S.**





Ubisoft's Killer Freaks is one of the few announced Wii U games.

The Wii U Experience

Although Nintendo didn't have full first-party Wii U games ready for E3, attendees could try Wii U "experiences" that demonstrated several ways in which the controller could offer new types of play. Each demo wowed the crowds with a seemingly endless array of innovative ideas.

This real-time HD demo shows what The Legend of Zelda could look like on Wii U.

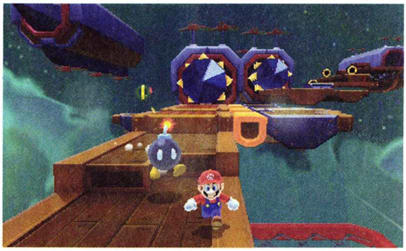
[Above] In Shield Pose, the controller is your window to the world.
[Below] In Chase Mii, only the pursued player can see where everyone is.

[Left] In Battle Mii, one player uses the motion controls of the new controller to fly a ship (that he views on his own screen) and battles two on-foot players who use the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers. [Above] Super Mario Bros. Mii can be played entirely on the new controller, with or without the TV.

The Biggest New Games

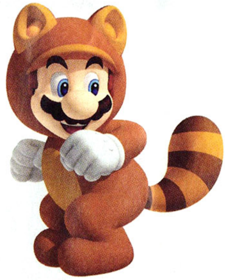
At E3 we poured dozens of hours into playing all the new titles for every Nintendo platform, and these are the games that rose above the rest. This is a fabulous lineup, and even better, you'll be able to get your hands on most of these titles this year! Unfortunately we didn't have the time or space to go into much detail this month, but you can look forward to much more on these games very soon.

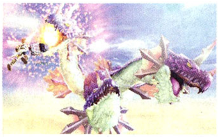
NINTENDO 3DS

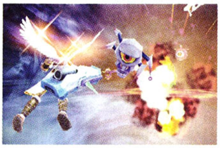


Super Mario*

Super Mario for the Nintendo 3DS features cutting-edge visuals, but the gameplay feels like a slight throwback to classic Mario games. The result is a magical platforming adventure that seems more like a marriage of Super Mario Bros. 3 and Super Mario 64 than like a successor to recent games such as Super Mario Galaxy. Expect the return of classic elements—think Mario's Tanooki Suit (which lets him smack enemies with his tail and extend his jump), enemy airships, and flagpoles as the stage goals, but in a fully featured 3D world. There's even a top-down stage inspired by The Legend of Zelda.





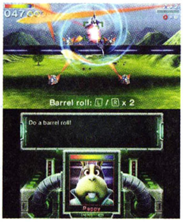


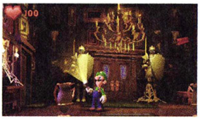
Kid Icarus: Uprising

Heroic angel Pit and the classic Kid Icarus franchise will finally return this holiday season. The on-rails flight stages are a joy to control, with silky-smooth Circle Pad maneuvering and effortless touch-screen targeting. Controlling Pit on the ground takes a little more getting used to, with twitchy, touch-sensitive controls (repeatedly swipe with the stylus to turn; slam the Circle Pad forward to dash, as in Super Smash Bros.) that hint at a wealth of hand-to-hand combat options for advanced players to master. The game also includes three-on-three ground-based multiplayer battles, plus a mode in which characters spring from specially designed AR cards to battle right on your desktop.

Star Fox 64 3D

We've already touched on this remake of the classic Nintendo 64 space-shooter many times, but the big news at E3 was optional gyro-sensor controls (maneuver your ship by moving the Nintendo 3DS system) and a robust multiplayer mode. Using a local wireless connection, up to four players can take part in aerial dogfights with just one Game Card needed. Thanks to the system's built-in camera, players can even watch a live video feed of each other's faces during the battle. The furry four-player fun starts in September.



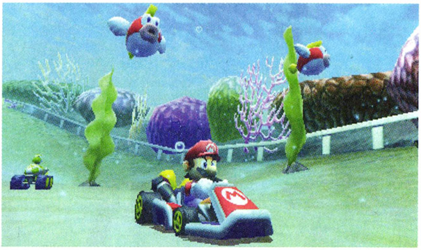


Luigi's Mansion 2

Developed by Next Level Games (responsible for the Mario Strikers games and Punch-Out!! for Wii), Luigi's Mansion 2 allows Mario's bro to once again rev up his Poltergust and use it to suck up ghouls in puzzle-filled haunts. Luigi will visit multiple mansions (including an icy version and a desert iteration) and use new techniques. Look for it in early 2012.

Mario Kart*

The classic kart-racing action takes to the skies with hang-gliding superjumps, and to the ocean floor with propeller-powered propulsion. Additionally, you can custom-build your kart from various parts to tailor it to the demands of each track. These welcome new features fit seamlessly with the kart controls perfected in the series's excellent Nintendo DS installment, but with the added benefit of the Circle Pad's smooth analog control. Up to eight players will be able to compete online, and the game—which Nintendo is codeveloping with Retro Studios—will take its starting position this holiday season.

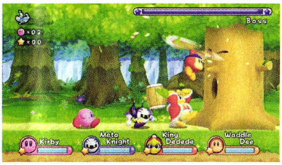


* NAME NOT FINAL

Wii

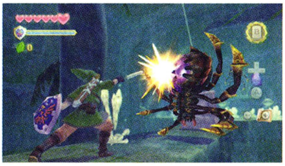
Kirby Wii*

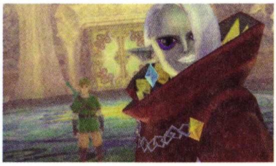
As you control the ability-copying Kirby, up to three friends can drop in as the sword-slashing Meta Knight, the hammer-swinging King Dedede, and the spear-thrusting Waddle Dee. In addition to allies, Kirby has new Super Abilities, which can annihilate enemies and pieces of the environment.



Rhythm Heaven

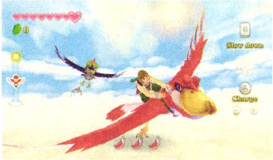
Rhythm Heaven fans can rest easy: the console debut of this lovably quirky series of music-based minigames is officially coming to North America. The all-new timing-based challenges (such as stabbing a rolling pea with a fork or slashing demons as a samurai warrior) eschew motion controls in favor of the simple and precise actions of tapping A or pressing A and B together. No release timeframe has been announced, but you can count on the Rhythm Heaven faithful at NP to keep you posted.

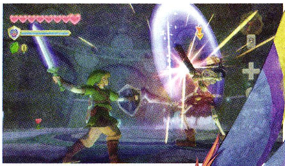


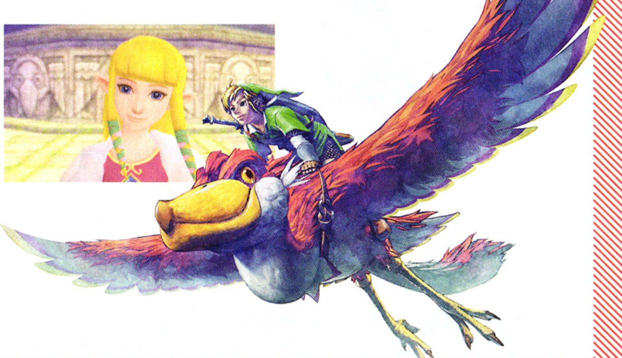


The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

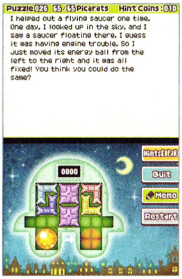
Confirmed for release this holiday season, the latest Zelda game delivers more than just the usual action, adventure, and exploration. Sure, you'll use tools (such as bombs, a bow, and the dronelike Beetle) to solve puzzles and pull off direction-specific sword attacks to slice through foes, but you'll also soar through the sky on the backs of giant birds and visit an alternate realm called the Siren World, where you'll have to evade invincible guardians. The game features a unique take on the character of Princess Zelda, as well as a freakishly creepy villain named Lord Ghirahim. Fans can also look forward to a special Zelda-themed gold Wii Remote Plus controller that will be released later this year.







NINTENDO DS

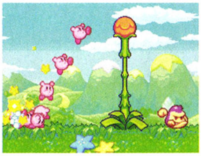


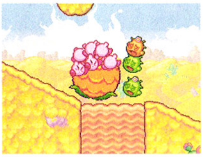
Puzzle 026 65/65 Picarats Hint Coins:010

I helped out a flying saucer one time. One day, I looked up in the sky, and I saw a saucer floating there. I guess it was having engine trouble. So I just moved its energy ball from the left to the right and it was all fixed! You think you could do the same?

Professor Layton and the Last Specter

Though "the last" appears it in its title, this is chronologically the first tale in the award-winning Professor Layton series. This prequel explains how the professor met his young assistant, Luke, while investigating a mysterious town where the titular specter resides. Naturally, you'll have to solve varied puzzles (up to 170 of them) to crack the case.





Kirby Mass Attack

One Kirby is cool, but 10 of 'em are nearly unstoppable. After a villain has divided Kirby into 10 individuals, you can sic a horde of pink puffballs on baddies and any other roadblocks that pop up as you're on your quest to get Kirby reconstituted. Kirby Mass Attack releases this September.

ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

STAR POWER

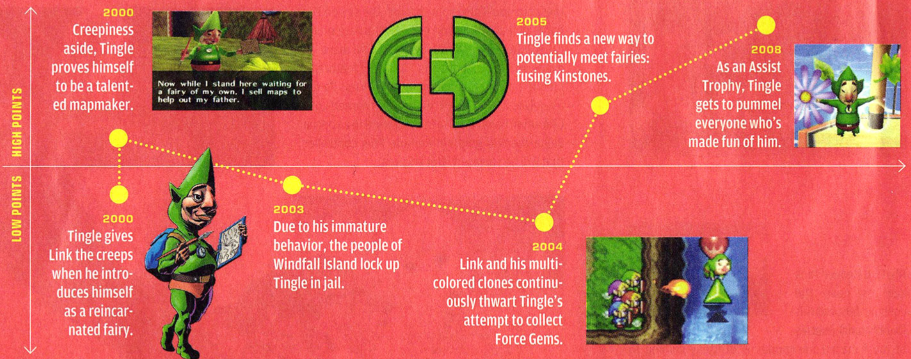
A closer look at the characters we love

Tingle

FIRST APPEARANCE:
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
NINTENDO 64, 2000

Love him or hate him, you can't deny that this middle-age wannabe-fairy makes Hyrule more interesting.

CAREER GRAPH



2000 Creepiness aside, Tingle proves himself to be a talented mapmaker.

Now while I stand here waiting for a fairy of my own, I sell maps to help out my father.

2005 Tingle finds a new way to potentially meet fairies: fusing Kinstones.

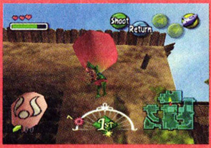
2008 As an Assist Trophy, Tingle gets to pummel everyone who's made fun of him.

2000 Tingle gives Link the creeps when he introduces himself as a reincarnated fairy.

2003 Due to his immature behavior, the people of Windfall Island lock up Tingle in jail.

2004 Link and his multicolored clones continuously thwart Tingle's attempt to collect Force Gems.

OUR FAVORITE TINGLE GAMES



The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask
NINTENDO 64, 2000
Despite his unorthodox appearance, Tingle proves himself to be a valuable ally in his gaming debut. He assists Link by selling his handcrafted maps to the Hylian adventurer. Of course, Link first needs to pop Tingle's balloon.

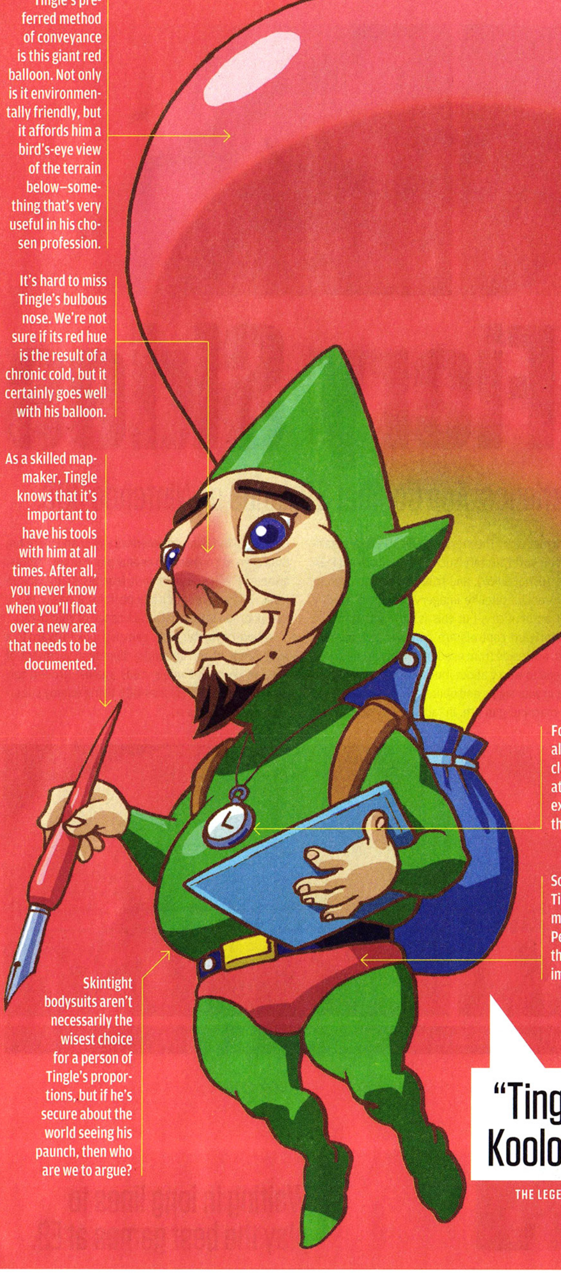
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker
GAMECUBE, 2003
Tingle becomes a playable character through the use of his Tingle Tuner. By using this device (and a Game Boy Advance that's connected to the GameCube), a second player can provide aid to Link.

This is Tingle Tower, the place where everyone goes to have a good time.

The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures
GAMECUBE, 2004
With a newfound love of Force Gems, Tingle gives Link and his three duplicates a common target when his tries to swipe the prized jewels. Tingle also runs the minigame-filled Tingle's Tower.

Just a wee bit more, Mr. Fairy! That's right! You only have 4 to go!

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap
GAME BOY ADVANCE, 2005
Although he has only a minor cameo, Tingle helps Link by fusing some Kinstones. Once Link has completed 100 fusions, Tingle rewards him with the not-at-all-gaudy Tingle Trophy.



Tingle's preferred method of conveyance is this giant red balloon. Not only is it environmentally friendly, but it affords him a bird's-eye view of the terrain below—something that's very useful in his chosen profession.

It's hard to miss Tingle's bulbous nose. We're not sure if its red hue is the result of a chronic cold, but it certainly goes well with his balloon.

As a skilled mapmaker, Tingle knows that it's important to have his tools with him at all times. After all, you never know when you'll float over a new area that needs to be documented.

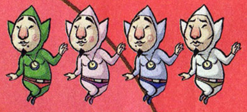
Skintight bodysuits aren't necessarily the wisest choice for a person of Tingle's proportions, but if he's secure about the world seeing his paunch, then who are we to argue?

For some reason, Tingle is always seen wearing this clock necklace that's stuck at 4:00. He would probably explain that the clock shows the correct time twice a day.

Some might complain that Tingle's red briefs don't leave much to the imagination. Personally, we're just glad they leave *something* to the imagination.

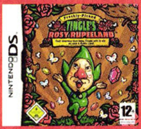
"Tingle, Tingle! Kooloo-Limpah!"

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
NINTENDO 64, 2000



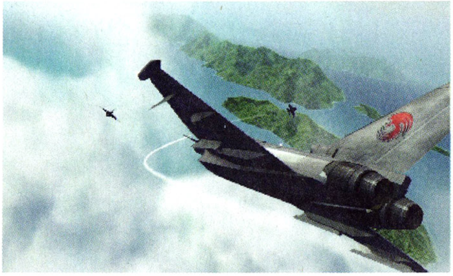
FREAKY FAMILY

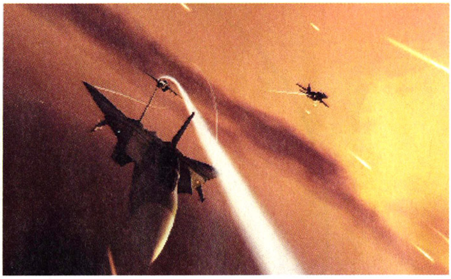
Tingle may be an odd fellow, but even the strangest of folks have families. In Majora's Mask, we meet Tingle's father: a rather large, hairy man who runs the Swamp Tourist Center. He's none too pleased with his son's fairy obsession. The Wind Waker introduced us to Tingle's brothers: twins Ankle (in purple) and Knuckle (in blue). David Jr. is the brother in white, but he isn't a blood relative. Even so, he's clearly at home with his adopted family.



OVERSEAS TINGLE

For a minor side character, Tingle sure has become popular—at least in Japan, where he's starred in a trio of games of his own. The first was Freshly-Picked Tingle's Rosy Rupeeland, in which he attempted to earn his way into a gem-filled paradise. That game's sequel, Color Changing Tingle's Love Balloon Trip, has Tingle attempting to become more popular with the ladies. The final game was a prize offered through Club Nintendo in Japan; Tingle's Balloon Fight places our leotard-clad hero in Nintendo's arcade/NES classic, Balloon Fight. So far, only one of these titles has been released outside of its home country: Rupeeland, which was also released in Europe.





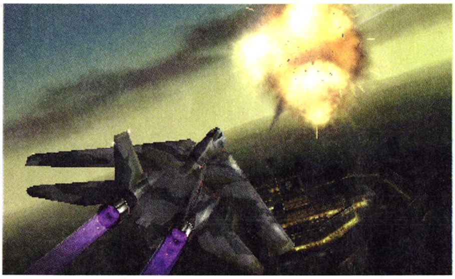
Fly the Fiery Skies

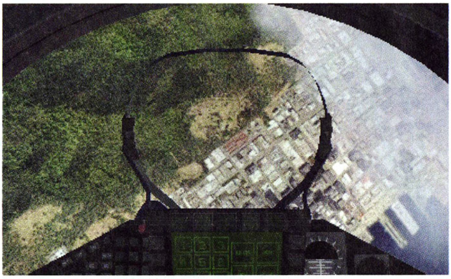
The ultimate flight-combat experience, Ace Combat 3D, lands on Nintendo 3DS.

WHEN IT COMES TO arcade-style aerial-combat games, one series soars above the rest: Namco Bandai's Ace Combat. Unfortunately, with the exception of a lone Game Boy Advance game, the series hasn't logged much flight time on Nintendo systems. That's going to change, however, when Ace Combat 3D touches down on the Nintendo 3DS handheld later this year.

As the series is known for, Ace Combat 3D is all about fast action, intense dogfights, and acrobatic aerial maneuvers. The stereoscopic 3D visuals, variety of real-world aircraft (such as the Mitsubishi F-2A and the Sukhoi Su-37), and true-to-life maps generated by GeoEye satellite imagery provide a healthy dose of authenticity, but this is no flight sim. The straightforward controls are built for pick-up-and-play fun, and aside from evading enemy attacks, you don't need to worry about much more than lining up a target in your sights and obliterating it with missiles and/or machine-gun fire. In fact, a new "Maneuver" ability makes taking out enemies easier and more fun than ever; as you keep an enemy plane in your sights, a meter fills up, and when it reaches its maximum level you can automatically perform a flashy move that puts you in optimal attack range of your foe.

Would-be fighter jocks can also look forward to a wide range of terrain and a diverse assortment of mission types, including raids against ground targets and dramatic clashes with flying enemy superweapons. —**CHRIS H.**

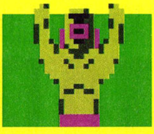


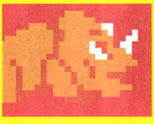


[Above left] Welcome to the danger zone, sucker! [Above right] The terrain looks stunning, but don't admire it from *too* close.

A WINNER IS...

Fans of Nintendo's first-party franchises.





DODONGO DISLIKES...

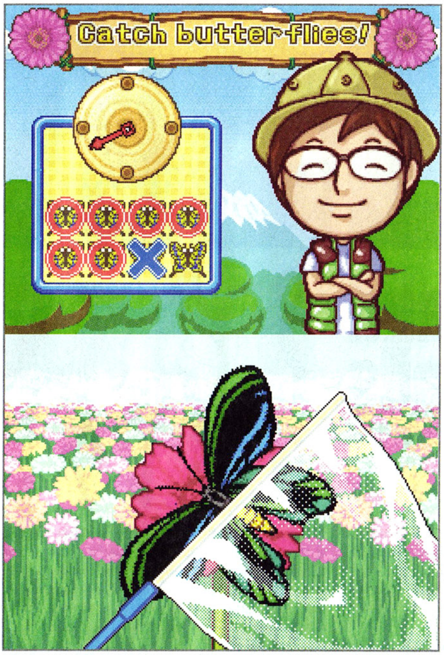
Waiting in long lines to play the best games at E3.

Mama Mia!

Cooking Mama 4 and Camping Mama show both Nintendo handhelds some motherly love.

IT'S THE MOTHER of all announcements: the Mama franchise is coming to Nintendo 3DS. Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic, due this fall, throws more than just 3D graphics into the mix—in addition to offering new activities, recipes, and ingredients, the game will let players use the system's built-in gyroscope to flip virtual burgers, crack eggs, and more. Some 200 touch-screen-based games are being cooked up for this savory, three-dimensional sequel.

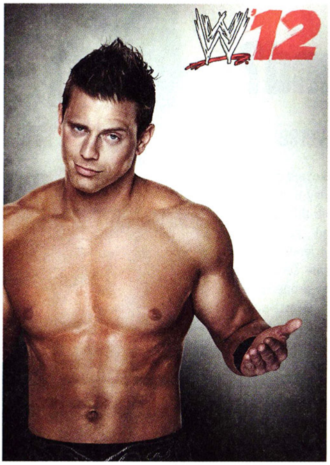
On the Nintendo DS front is Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures, which blends 100 different cooking and outdoor activities. Players are tasked with everything from setting up tents and collecting insects to catching chickens and frying up their eggs for a campfire-side breakfast. Don't worry—there'll also be plenty of more-active challenges (including rock climbing, cave exploring, and rowing) on the menu. Like Cooking Mama 4, this one will be on store shelves this fall. **—RANDY N.**



Maybe Majesco's next "Mama" title can combine these two concepts and let you put those captured butterflies to use in the kitchen for a tasty soufflé.

Monkey Forest
Time to explore!

Flip it and grill it!



WWE's New Era of Awesome

The next WWE game for Wii is going to be different. How different? So different that THQ is abandoning the long-running "SmackDown vs. Raw" title and simply calling its next wrestling game WWE '12. Featuring a gameplay system dubbed Predator Technology, this grappling extravaganza will offer revamped controls, a new submission system, enhanced presentation, an improved WWE Universe mode, and an updated roster that includes the likes of The Miz, John Cena, Randy Orton, and—in his video game debut—Alberto Del Rio. Look for it in November.

The Pursuit of Wappiness

Sega Toys and Activision will bring Wappy Dog to Nintendo DS this holiday season. The hybrid toy includes a mechanical dog that owners raise, interact with, and control via an accompanying DS game. Behavioral and interactive highlights include "evolving" bark-based communications, mood states that shape Wappy's behavior, minigames in which Wappy directly participates, and a stage-based aging system through which Wappy matures over time.

POWER QUIZ

EASY

What is the name of the frequent Game & Watch protagonist that went on to star in the Super Smash Bros. series?

AVERAGE

What was the name of the first Game & Watch that Nintendo created?

HARDCORE

What famous Nintendo character starred in a hockey Game & Watch game?

ANSWERS

EASY: Mr. Game & Watch; AVERAGE: Ball; HARDCORE: Donkey Kong

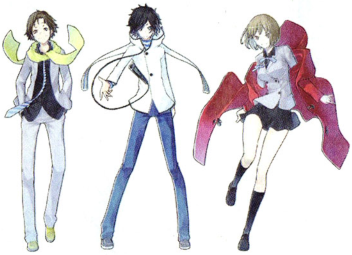
THURSDAY 19:30

迫　真琴

確かにジプスは誤解されやすい。
多少の非難は承知の上だ。

Devil and the Details

Atlus's **Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2** for Nintendo DS promises more devils, less survival.



IN MARCH, Atlus of Japan made the surprise announcement that Megami Tensei spin-off Devil Survivor would be seeing a sequel on the Nintendo DS system. Now Atlus's US branch has made the significantly less surprising (but still welcome) announcement that Devil Survivor 2 will also be coming to Western shores.

This installment stars a group of high-school students who discover a website that predicts the exact time and manner of their deaths. They manage to skirt their scheduled demise in a subway accident, only to get caught in a (perhaps related?) demonic invasion of Japan. Like its predecessor, Devil Survivor 2 combines turn-based tactical strategy with the collecting and combining of demons that's at the core of the Megami Tensei franchise. This version also adds an element borrowed from the popular Persona series, in which the game tracks the relationships between the human party members you recruit, allowing you to enhance their abilities by strengthening the personal bonds between them.

Devil Survivor 2 has a much larger cast of characters to recruit, and you're gonna need them, because every party member is now susceptible to the cruel embrace of permanent death. Devil Survivor's high-schooler murder spree is scheduled to begin sometime in 2012. —**CASEY L.**

Tron in Wonderland?

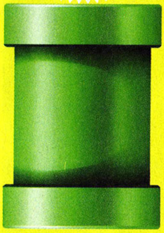
The wonderful worlds collide in **Disney Universe**.

DISNEY INTERACTIVE STUDIOS will bring Disney Universe to the Wii console this fall. The action-oriented game will focus on kid-friendly, multiplayer fun while serving up loads of Disney-property tie-ins, including characters and locations from the Mouse House's cell-animation, computer-animation (aka Pixar), and live-action empires. After choosing a costume based on a classic or contemporary Disney character, players will wield a tool unique to their costume as they adventure through worlds inspired by Disney flicks. (Said tool will change and grow in power as the player advances through the game.) More than 40 costumes and six worlds will no doubt keep the Disney mash-ups—and the pop-culture dysphoria—coming. —**PATRICK C.**

WARP ZONE

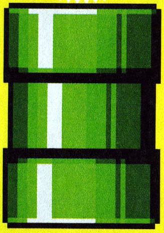
What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO



Featuring an early look at The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, the debut of the DS Lite, and the first details on Wii games such as Super Mario Galaxy, Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, Rayman: Raving Rabbids, and Red Steel, the July 2006 issue was overflowing with exciting content. In addition, the issue contained a massive review of New Super Mario Bros. (it received a 9.5 from four different reviewers) and a New SMB pull-out tip book.

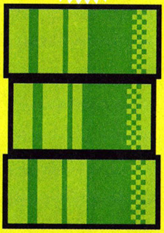
10 YEARS AGO

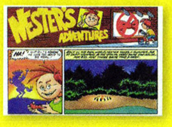


STRATEGIES, MAPS AND MORE
NINTENDO POWER
ADVANCE
PREMIERE ISSUE!
IN-DEPTH STRATEGY IN THIS ISSUE

Nintendo fans got a double dose of Power in July 2001. In addition to the regular issue of Nintendo Power (which featured Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 on the cover), this month included the release of the first issue of the quarterly Nintendo Power Advance. Focused purely on—as you might have guessed—the Game Boy Advance, this publication offered lengthy strategy articles on games such as Super Mario Advance and Castlevania: Circle of the Moon.

20 YEARS AGO




NESTER'S ADVENTURES

The July 1991 issue of Nintendo Power is noteworthy for a few of reasons. (1) It features a somewhat legendary photograph of a Game Boy that was charred (yet continued to function!) during Operation: Desert Storm. (2) It contains a totally rad spread highlighting the features of the then-upcoming Super NES. (3) It marks the debut of the *Nester's Adventures* comic strip, which replaced *Howard & Nester* following spokesperson Howard Phillips's departure from Nintendo.

Virtually Unlimited Entertainment

NINTENDO DS
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD PLUS
101 Mahjong
202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
101 Picture Puzzles
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6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
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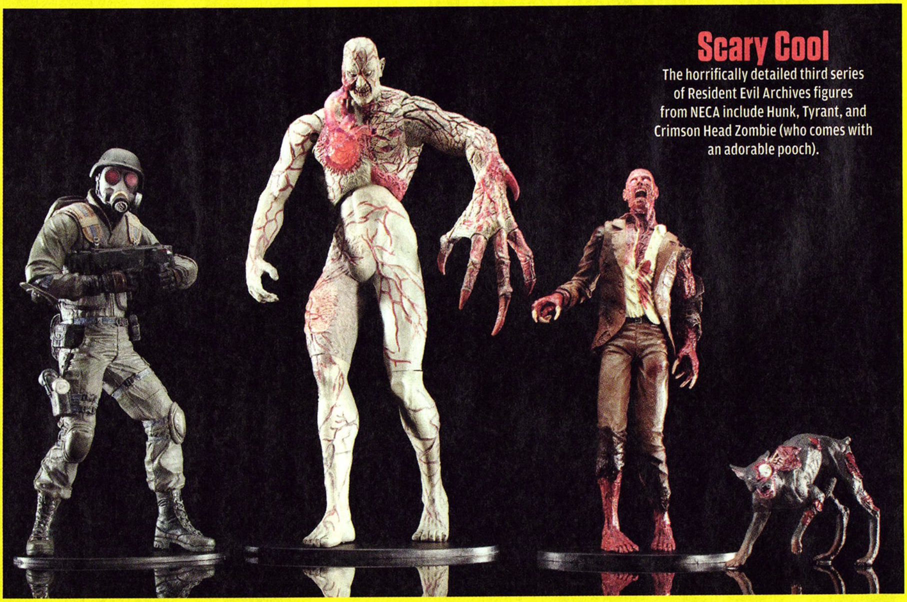
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

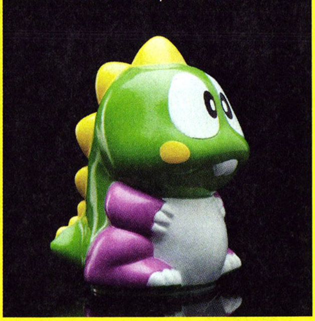


Scary Cool

The horrifically detailed third series of Resident Evil Archives figures from NECA include Hunk, Tyrant, and Crimson Head Zombie (who comes with an adorable pooch).

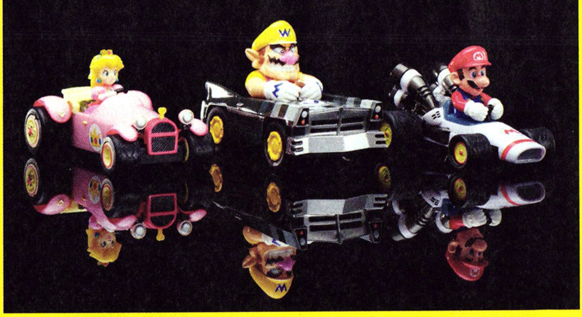
Bubble Bank

Hey, Bub! No, we're not channeling Wolverine– the character featured in this Japanese Bubble Bobble/Bust-A-Move bank really is named Bub.



Ready for Lap Two

This second assortment of Mario Kart DS pull-back racers features entirely new vehicle molds of Princess Peach in the Royale, Wario in the Brute, and Mario in the B Dasher.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

GAME FORECAST

Wii

The Adventures of Tintin*	Ubisoft	12/11
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	FALL 11
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	7/11
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	Crave	HOL 11
Centipede: Infestation	Atari	FALL 11
Champion Jockey: G1 Jockey & Gallop Racer	Tecmo Koei	FALL 11
Country Dance 2	GameMill	11/11
DanceDanceRevolution II	Konami	FALL 11
Disney Universe	Disney	FALL 11
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	8/11
Family Feud 2012*	Ubisoft	11/11
Family Game Night 4: The Game Show	Electronic Arts	10/11
Family Game Night Fun Pack	Electronic Arts	10/11
Fortune Street	Nintendo	HOL 11
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Go Vacation	Namco Bandai	FALL 11
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Happy Feet Two—The Videogame	Warner Bros.	FALL 11
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Jaws: Ultimate Predator	Majesco	FALL 11
Jimmie Johnson's Anything with an Engine	Autumn	2011
Just Dance 3	Ubisoft	FALL 11
Karaoke Revolution Glee: Volume 3	Konami	FALL 11
Kirby Wii	Nintendo	FALL 11
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	HOL 11
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Madden NFL 12	Electronic Arts	8/11
Mario Party 9	Nintendo	TBA
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	Sega	11/11
Monopoly Collection	Electronic Arts	10/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Need for Speed: The Run	Electronic Arts	11/11
Nickelodeon Dance	2K Play	11/11
Nicktoons MLB	2K Play	8/11
Phineas and Ferb: Across the 2nd Dimension	Disney	8/11
Power Rangers Samurai	Namco Bandai	FALL 12
The Price is Right Decades	Ubisoft	11/11
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	2011
Rhythm Heaven	Nintendo	TBA
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	Natsume	FALL 11
Sesame Street: Ready, Set, Grover!	Warner Bros.	SUM 11
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	Activision	10/11
The Smurfs Dance Party	Ubisoft	7/11
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	FALL 11
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Trivial Pursuit: Bet You Know It	Electronic Arts	10/11
Winter Stars	Deep Silver	FALL 11
WWE '12	THQ	11/11
X-Men: Destiny	Activision	FALL 11
Zumba Fitness 2	Majesco	11/11

NINTENDO DS

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	FALL 11
Ben 10 Triple Pack	D3Publisher	SUM 11
Beyblade Metal Masters	Konami	11/11
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	Majesco	9/11
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	7/11
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dora and Kai-Lan's Pet Shelter	2K Play	11/11
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	Nintendo	8/11
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Happy Feet Two—The Videogame	Warner Bros.	FALL 11
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns	Natsume	2011
Hollywood Files	Easy	6/11
Kirby Mass Attack	Nintendo	9/11
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Madden NFL Football	Electronic Arts	3/12
Moxie Girlz	GameMill	11/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nicktoons MLB	2K Play	8/11
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Phineas and Ferb: Across the 2nd Dimension	Disney	8/11
Power Rangers Samurai	Namco Bandai	FALL 11
Pillow Pets	GameMill	11/11
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	Nintendo	FALL 11
Sesame Street: Ready, Set, Grover!	Warner Bros.	SUM 11
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	Atlus	WINT 12
The Smurfs	Ubisoft	7/11
Solatorobo	Xseed	FALL 11
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	FALL 11
Super Fossil Fighters	Nintendo	HOL 11
Team Umizoomi	2K Play	11/11
ThinkSMART Chess for Kids	Mentor	9/11
ThinkSMART Naraba: The Labyrinth of Light	Mentor	10/11
ThinkSMART Naraba: The Mysterious Palace	Mentor	10/11
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	WINT 12
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	FALL 11
Wappy Dog	Activision	HOL 11
X-Men: Destiny	Activision	FALL 11
Zoobles	Activision	11/11

NINTENDO 3DS

Ace Combat 3D	Namco Bandai	2011
The Adventures of Tintin	Ubisoft	12/11
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3Publisher	SUM 11
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Assassin's Creed: Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	FALL 11
Bit.Trip Saga	Aksys	FALL 11
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Brunswick Pro Bowling	Crave	TBA
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	FALL 11
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Cave Story 3D	NIS America	8/11
Centipede: Infestation	Atari	FALL 11
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	Majesco	OCT 11
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
Crush 3D	Sega	9/11
Cute Puppies	Ubisoft	10/11
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	Konami	SUM 11
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	8/11
Dual Pen Sports	Namco Bandai	7/11
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Racers: Photo Finish	Majesco	9/11
Farm*	Ubisoft	11/11
FIFA 12	Electronic Arts	FALL 11
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger 3D	Konami	FALL 11
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	Natsume	SUM 11
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Happy Feet Two: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	FALL 11
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns	Natsume	2011
Heroes of Ruin	Square Enix	2012
The Hidden	Majesco	10/11
Horses 3D	Ubisoft	10/11
Imagine Babyz 3D	Ubisoft	10/11
Imagine Fashion Designer	Ubisoft	10/11
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	Ubisoft	8/11
Jaws: Ultimate Predator	Majesco	FALL 11
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	HOL 11
Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	TBA
Kung Fu Panda: Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	2012
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Luigi's Mansion 2	Nintendo	2012
Mahjong Cub3D	Atlus	7/11
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	Sega	2/12
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	HOL 11
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	SUM 11
Mega Man Legends 3	Capcom	TBA
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	HOL 11
Michael Jackson The Experience	Ubisoft	10/11
Nano Assault	Majesco	11/11
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
NCIS*	Ubisoft	10/11
Need for Speed: The Run	Electronic Arts	11/11
Nikoli Pencil Puzzle	Konami	FALL 11
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
Pet Zombies	Majesco	10/11
Petz Fantasy 3D	Ubisoft	SUM 11
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Puzzler Mind Gym*	Ubisoft	9/11
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	3/12
Raving Rabbids 5*	Ubisoft	11/11
Resident Evil: Revelations	Capcom	2012
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	Atlus	8/11
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Shinobi	Sega	9/11
The Sims 3 Pets	Electronic Arts	FALL 11
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	Activision	10/11
Sonic Generations	Sega	11/11
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	FALL 11
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	9/11
Sudoku Premier Edition	Majesco	TBA
Super Mario*	Nintendo	HOL 11
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tales of the Abyss	Namco Bandai	FALL 11
Tekken 3D	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tetris	Tetris Online	10/11
Thor: God of Thunder	Sega	FALL 11
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA
WWE '12	THQ	11/11
Zoo Resort	Ubisoft	SUM 11

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games
3. Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny
4. Spider-Man: Edge of Time
5. Cartoon Network: Punch Time Explosion

NINTENDO DS

1. Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns
2. Spider-Man: Edge of Time
3. Phineas and Ferb: Across the 2nd Dimension
4. Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal
5. X-Men: Destiny

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Mario Kart*
2. Super Mario*
3. Paper Mario*
4. Kid Icarus: Uprising
5. Star Fox 64 3D

DOWNLOAD

IN THIS SECTION

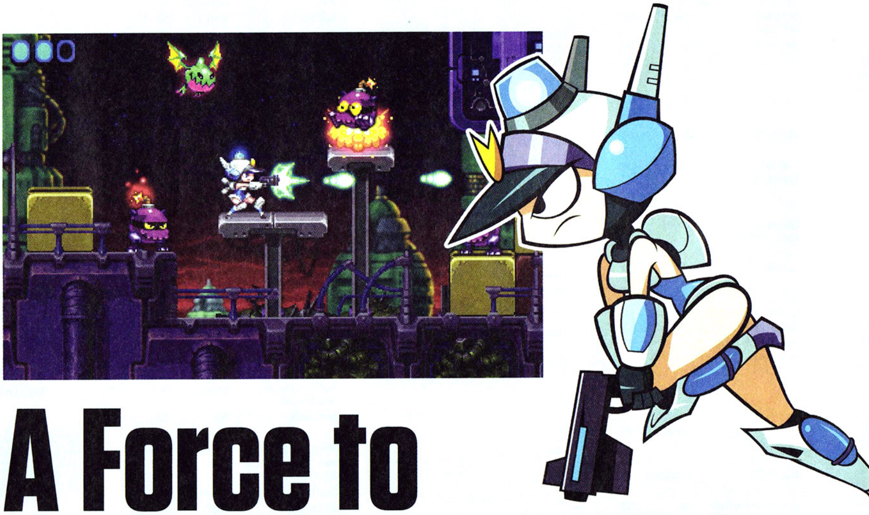
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOAD PREVIEW
Mighty Switch Force

NINTENDO 3DS UPDATE
Nintendo eShop

WIIWARE REVIEWS
FAST RACING LEAGUE
GABRIELLE'S GHOSTLY GROOVE: MONSTER MIX
OVERFLOW

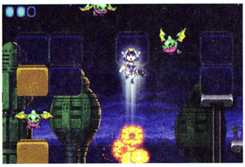
VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
CHRONO TRIGGER
SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

DSIWARE REVIEWS
3D TWIST & MATCH
99 BULLETS
B TEAM—EPISODE 1: DUST & STEEL
BIG BASS ARCADE
GO SERIES TOWER OF DEUS
HOUSE M.D.—EPISODE 1: GLOBETROTTING
MIGHTY MILKY WAY
PUZZLE QUEST: CHALLENGE OF THE WARLORDS
VALET PARKING 1989
WHACK-A-FRIEND
WORD SEARCHER 3



A Force to Be Reckoned With

WayForward explodes onto the Nintendo 3DS download scene with Mighty Switch Force.

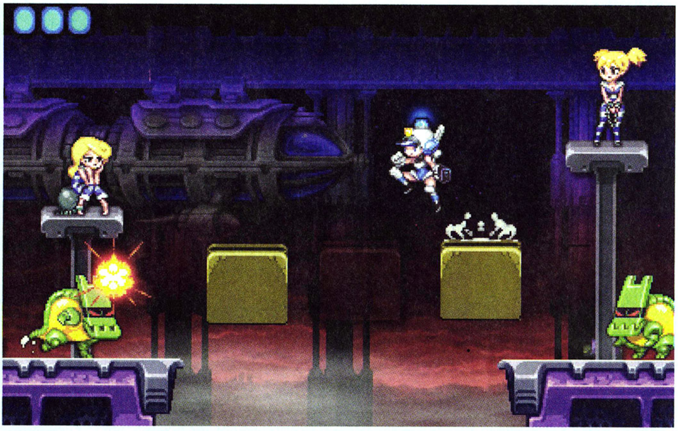


FIRST CAME MIGHTY Flip Champs for DSiWare. Then came Mighty Milky Way. Now developer WayForward is making its Nintendo 3DS downloadable debut with an all-new entry in its "Mighty" pseudoseries: Mighty Switch Force. Like its predecessors, Mighty Switch Force features a feisty female lead character and gameplay that blends action and puzzle-solving, but this time out the emphasis is much more on the action portion of that equation.

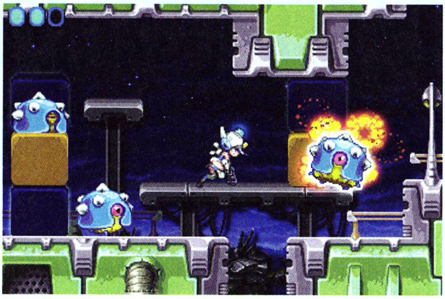
Mighty Switch Force lets you assume the role of strangely shapely robotic law-enforcement officer Patricia Wagon. As a member of the Galactic Penal Squad, it's up to her to track down and defeat the evil Space Hooligans, a gang of villains led by the five Hooligan Sisters. To do so, you'll engage in traditionally controlled retro-inspired 2D action—running, jumping, and blasting baddies with your pellet gun—as you make your way through the futuristic world of Planet Land.

But Officer Wagon has another trick up her sleeve—and it's a doozy. By using her Siren Helmet, she can interface with the "machine matrix" of Planet Land to instantly reconfigure the landscape. In gameplay terms, this means that with the press of a button, certain objects in the foreground will move into the background, and objects in the background move to the foreground. Not only does this innovative play mechanic fill the game's puzzle quota—you'll need to figure out how to manipulate the landscape to navigate the levels—but it can be used as an offensive weapon. If you pull an object into the foreground while an enemy is in its way, for example, you can smash him right into the screen! (Now *that's* what we call a background check.)

The game features 16 levels of action—taking you to locales such as freeways, junkyards, underground mazes, and space stations—as well as unlockable bonus content, and the development team is currently considering adding extra features; there may even be some form of AR functionality. To find out even more about what's in store in Mighty Switch Force, we had a chat with the game's director, Matt Bozon. —**CHRIS H.**



That siren on Officer Wagon's head isn't just for looks. When she activates it, blocks move from the foreground to the background and vice versa.



NINTENDO POWER **What about Mighty Switch Force makes it something you can experience only on the Nintendo 3DS system?**

MATT BOZON In Mighty Switch Force we've crafted a unique puzzle mechanic that gets players not only watching in stereo, but actually exploring solutions in the third dimension. It's the kind of platformer we knew was possible, but hadn't seen until now. And as fans of our previous titles can profess, some of our thematic elements—T-rexes with eye lasers, wall-eyed fishmen, jet-pack cats, belly-dance transformations, popcorn explosions, vocaloid J-Pop ballads, hottie pirates, and whipping puppies with your hair—would only confound retailers.

The game certainly seems more action-oriented than other Mighty titles. Was that your intent?

Definitely. The core gameplay is jump and shoot, with block-switching puzzles sprinkled throughout. The team is made up entirely of Contra 4 veterans, so expect ample fiery explosions and crunchy sound effects.

What can you tell us about Officer Wagon? She's a robot, eh?

She prefers the term *artificial person*, but yes, she is! Like previous WayForward heroines, Patricia Wagon is an adorably winsome lass. But unlike her predecessors, this gal packs heat and has an itchy trigger finger.

And who, exactly, are the Space Hooligans?

The Space Hooligans are a group of hostile lifeforms created by the five Hooligan Sisters—dangerous criminal masterminds who masquerade as ditzy girls. As Wagon explores each level in hopes of apprehending these villainous ladies, Space Hooligans will be there to stop her every step of the way. Thankfully they speak the same language as Wagon's pellet gun: animated violence!

Can you give a couple of examples of how puzzles work?

Sure. In a simple puzzle, you might need to cross a pit that's too wide to jump past. By using your Switch power, you can pull distant blocks closer to the screen in 3D and use them as stepping stones. However, any blocks on the playfield will retreat into the background. That's all pretty basic stuff. Where it gets complicated is when you have to think several steps ahead. Will the blocks underneath your feet pull away? Will blocks in the background zoom up and smash you? What will happen if you pull blocks out from under an enemy? Puzzles are built around these kinds of mysteries, and the interesting and unexpected outcomes.

Are puzzles and combat seamlessly integrated?

It's seamless. After reaching a high ledge you might find yourself face to face with an enemy. Or to remove a foe you might need to drop him into a new area by switching out blocks, and then fill him full of lead. Even firing your weapon can be a puzzle, since pellets impact on "switchable" objects.

What's on the lower screen?

The touch screen mounts your Hooligan Tracker. It's a digital compass that points the way to any ne'er-do-wells lurking just out of sight. Once every miscreant is safely behind bars, it guides the player to the extraction point.

How big would you say the game is?

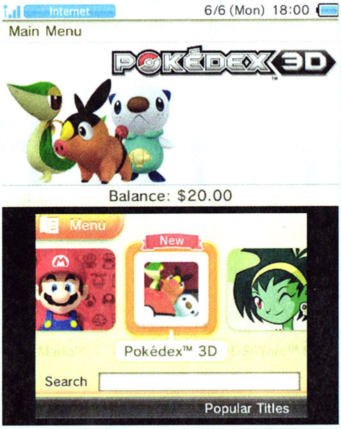
Though [the levels] are longer and more action-packed than our previous Mighty titles, the total game time will be somewhat shorter, and here's why. What I love about NES-era games, and especially Contra, Journey to Silius, and Mega Man 2, is that once mastered, they can be easily beaten in a single session. Nowadays if I want the satisfaction of sitting down and "taking in" a game in one sitting, I have to look backward. We're going to try to change that, and embrace the pocket-sized appeal that's been lost over the years. That's the beauty of the eShop—we can experiment with different kinds of releases and see what the players like. So prepare for gaming concentrate.

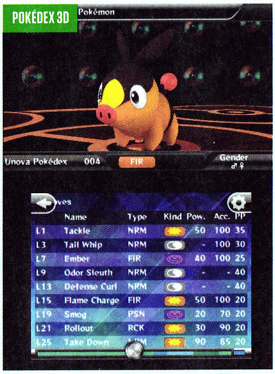
Are there boss fights?

It's become Mighty tradition to include a timed automatic mechanism that turns the tables on the player in the last level. We're going to do that again, but I'll keep the details sparse. But it's an auto-switching monster. That's the answer. An auto-switching monster. Shoot; I gave it away! Hmm, maybe there's still time to change the plan....

What else should players know about the game?

We want them to enjoy Mighty Switch Force from top to bottom. And if they do, they should consider downloading our other award-winning titles. They are just a Wi-Fi signal away and remain fresh as a daisy, blessedly preserved in the eShop awaiting a regal kiss of awakening. Use your Nintendo 3DS as one would a butterfly net and gather up the invisible webs of bliss that encircle you even as you read this. Divine moment done! Nab our games right out of the air, yo!

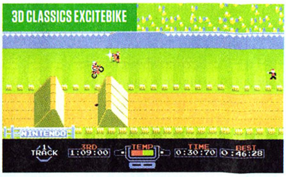


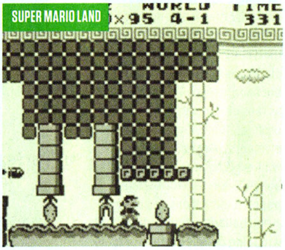


ves

	Name	Type	Kind	Pow.	Acc.	PP
L1	Tackle	NRM	✸	50	100	35
L3	Tail Whip	NRM	◐	-	100	30
L7	Ember	FIR	◎	40	100	25
L9	Odor Sleuth	NRM	◐	-	-	40
L13	Defense Curl	NRM	◐	-	-	40
L15	Flame Charge	FIR	✸	50	100	20
L19	Smog	PSN	◎	20	70	20
L21	Rollout	RCK	✸	30	90	20
L25	Take Down	NRM	✸	90	85	20

[Left] From Pokémon to Mario, your favorite series are available in the Nintendo eShop.





ALL SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

eShop 'Til You Drop

The Nintendo eShop and more are now available as part of the June Nintendo 3DS system update.

WHEN IT WAS released this past March, the Nintendo 3DS handheld brought a lot of exciting new features to the world of video games. Now, thanks to a system update that became available in early June, the groundbreaking hardware is able to do even more.

The biggest new addition is the long-awaited Nintendo eShop. By logging onto the eShop, you can purchase a variety of digital content, including original Nintendo 3DS downloadable software, DSiWare titles (more than 370 in all!), Virtual Console games (portable classics that originally appeared on Game Boy, Game Boy Color, Game Gear, and TurboGrafx16), and 3D Classics (3D-enhanced versions of retro titles). The eShop is divided up into multiple categories (called shelves)—including New Arrivals, the Staff Pick of the Week, Mario, and much more—each of which can hold up to 20 games or videos. You can also access shelves that showcase the latest news, most popular downloads, and info on the most recent retail releases.

If you want to know more about a given game, you need only tap on its icon, and you'll get the option to view screenshots, watch movies, check out user ratings, read additional info, and access external websites. You can even add the game to your Wish List so you can bookmark it and purchase it at a later time. If you don't see the game you're looking for on any of the shelves, you can always use the eShop's search command, which (along with other functions) is conveniently accessible from a persistent menu in the upper-left corner of the touch screen.

Among the initial eShop offerings are Pokédex 3D (a free download that contains loads of info on every Pokémon from Pokémon Black Version and Pokémon White Version and allows you to view Pokémon in 3D via AR markers), a 3D Classics version of Excitebike (which will be free until July 7, 2011), and Virtual Console editions of The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX, Super Mario Land, Alleyway, and Radar Mission (priced at $5.99, $3.99, $2.99, and $2.99, respectively).

Note that the eShop isn't compatible with Wii Points cards; to make purchases, you'll have to buy Cash Cards from your favorite retailer or use a credit card to deposit funds into your eShop wallet.

The eShop isn't the only new component available through the update, however. You'll also get access to a free Internet browser and gain the ability to transfer any DSiWare you've purchased on your Nintendo DSi system to your Nintendo 3DS. If you aren't already taking advantage of these features, what are you waiting for? To update your Nintendo 3DS, make sure your system's wireless Internet connection is active, then access the System Settings, select Other Settings, scroll to the rightmost page, and choose System Update. —**CHRIS H.**

DSiWare favorites such as Shantae: Risky's Revenge, Mighty Flip Champs, and Mighty Milky Way are now available through the Nintendo eShop.

EVALUATION STATION

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

Hench
Vamp
Sorcerer
HP MP
800:80
50:65
800:80

Zombor
HP MP
800:76
800:80
800:78

CHRONO TRIGGER

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** GENRE: **RPG** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1995**

Chris H.'s Pick

Even more than 15 years after its Super NES release, Chrono Trigger holds up as one of the greatest role-playing games ever conceived. The game's reputation for being a "dream project" is well-earned; it really does excel in virtually every category, from the graphics to the music to the fantastic cast of characters. Even the localization is superb; in many ways, the script is superior to that of the Nintendo DS version of Chrono Trigger that was released in 2008.

Of course, what really sets this game apart is its brilliant time-traveling hook. The ability to travel to different eras, complete tasks, and see how your actions have changed the future is an inspired bit of game-making. Especially fulfilling is the way the game sets up various seemingly unconnected elements throughout the ages and then ties them all together at critical junctures. But even with five time periods to explore, none of the content is wasteful or superfluous. There's no artificial lengthening here; every bit of gameplay either drives the story forward or allows you to engage in a fun, meaningful side quest.

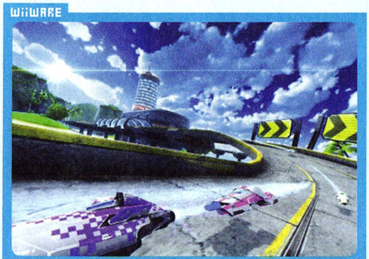
Looking at Chrono Trigger from a historical perspective, it seems like a game that forms a bridge between—appropriately enough—Japanese RPGs of the past and modern role-playing efforts. Though the game features vintage RPG staples such as hand-drawn 2D graphics and a traditional menu-driven turn-based battle system, it also boasts contemporary elements such as seamless transitions between exploration and battles, a complete lack of random encounters, and the ability to see all active party members on the field at all times. Such features might not sound like much, but they go a long way in helping the title stand the test of time (no pun intended).

By RPG standards Chrono Trigger is a little on the short side—you should have no trouble getting through the game in less than 30 hours—but it offers tons of replay value (in the form of more than a dozen optional endings) to make up for it. In fact, at only 800 Wii Points, Chrono Trigger might provide more gameplay for your buck than anything else on Virtual Console. The only drawback to this version is that it doesn't feature the beautifully animated cut-scenes or additional content found in the DS edition. That aside, I can't recommend this game enough to players who have the slightest interest in RPGs.

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

WIIWARE



FAST RACING LEAGUE

PUBLISHER: **SHIN'EN MULTIMEDIA** GENRE: **RACING** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

FAST Racing League isn't just another futuristic racing title. As promised, the game allows you to switch your vehicle between a light phase and a dark phase, each of which allows you to use different advantageous elements on the racetrack. The result is a uniquely strategic racing experience that forces you to learn the ins and outs of each track so you know when to phase-switch and when to boost (both actions deplete the same meter) as you attempt to find the best racing line. Getting used to this extra component can lead to some trial-and-error moments (and the aggressive AI doesn't help matters), but it ends up being a lot of fun. The game also boasts excellent track design and fantastic visuals. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

WIIWARE

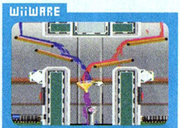
GABRIELLE'S GHOSTLY GROOVE: MONSTER MIX

PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
GENRE: **RHYTHM**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Similar to rhythm/dance games like Just Dance, Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove is Natsume's stab at the formula on WiiWare. But with its terribly uncatchy music and lousy game mechanics, this experience is decidedly *not* groovy. In fact, you don't even have to dance, since simply shaking the Wii Remote controller to the beat of its vibration is more effective than actually doing the dance moves. —CODY M.

Grumble Grumble

WIIWARE



OVERFLOW

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Overflow presents players with cascades of colored liquids, then tasks them with guiding the falling streams into same-colored pipes by deploying a small assortment of tools. This physics puzzler builds complexity by adding obstacles, switches, and even the need to blend colors. While the gameplay is varied and rewarding, excessive difficulty (created by time constraints), slightly dodgy controls, and sometimes-suspect physics conspire to keep this one from its potential greatness. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSIWARE

3D TWIST & MATCH

PUBLISHER: **SANUK GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Rotating an object along its axes to make its shape match up with a silhouette doesn't sound terribly exciting, but it's actually somewhat fun thanks to 3D Twist & Match's rapid-fire pacing. A limited time to complete each puzzle keeps you on your toes, and the controls are up to the job. However, the action does wear thin pretty quickly, and on some occasions the silhouette you're supposed to match is completely obscured by the object. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1992**

In a lot of ways, Super Adventure Island is a typical early-'90s platformer: you run, you jump, you snag wacky power-ups, you clobber goofy enemies, and you lose a life and restart from the nearest checkpoint if you take even a single hit. There's a bit of variety to spice things up, but those are the basics. Two aspects set this game apart from its contemporaries, however: it's got an awesome, funky soundtrack that's worth the price of admission on its own, and it's really freaking hard. Once you get into a groove the game becomes very satisfying, but the easily frustrated need not apply. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

DSIWARE

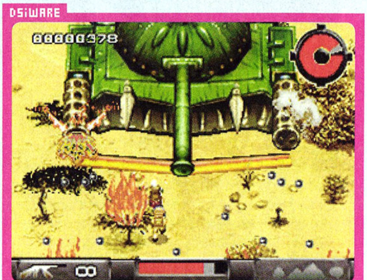
99 BULLETS

PUBLISHER: **ENJOYUP GAMES**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

A 3D vector shooter with an intriguing premise (you're given only 99 bullets per stage to score the points required to advance to the next level), 99 Bullets offers high-quality graphics, superb sound, and truly impressive variation in both stage design and play dynamics. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

DSIWARE



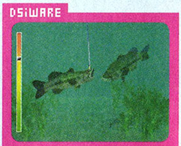
B TEAM—EPISODE 1: DUST & STEEL

PUBLISHER: **SUBDUED GAMES** GENRE: **SHOOTER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Let me get this straight—there's a game about a ragtag group of soldiers called the B Team, and it doesn't feature a single Mr. T reference? Talk about a missed opportunity. Actually, this game misses opportunities all over. Even though you control a squad of up to three characters, they all play exactly the same. And although aiming via the touch screen sounds good in theory, in practice it obscures the field of view. The graphics are decent and the action is solid, but the lack of recovery time after you get hit leads to cheap deaths. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



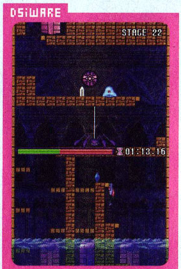
BIG BASS ARCADE

PUBLISHER: **BIG JOHN GAMES**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

If you're interested in fishing games but find them frustratingly obtuse (or boring), Big Bass Arcade's intriguingly pared-down experience might just float your boat. Focusing on quick, time-limited gameplay scenarios and featuring a restricted set of intuitive controls, this angling experience solves some of the "problems" inherent to the genre. Unfortunately, it does so for a price; the repetition factor here is sky-high. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



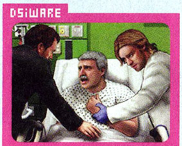
GO SERIES TOWER OF DEUS

PUBLISHER: **GAMEBRIDGE**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

This platformer rewards precise movement over quick reflexes. Although new obstacles are introduced at a fairly steady clip at the start of the game, the levels become repetitive shortly thereafter. Sluggish controls also get in the way, but not to a vast degree. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



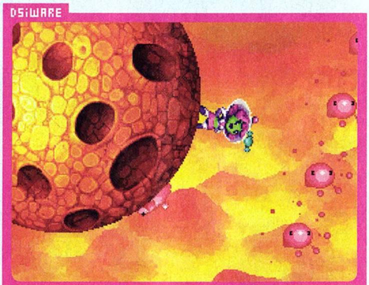
HOUSE M.D. EPISODE 1: GLOBETROTTING

PUBLISHER: **LEGACY INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Fans of the TV doctor might get a few smirks out of this game's dialogue, but that's where the enjoyment ends. The rest of this incredibly weak adventure is padded out with a series of tedious minigames that tend to be pointlessly simple or plagued with wildly unresponsive touch-screen controls. The game's short play time, high price, and lack of replay value are the final nails in its coffin. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



MIGHTY MILKY WAY

PUBLISHER: **WAYFORWARD** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Phil T's Pick

Like WayForward's Mighty Flip Champs, this pseudosequel sports cute characters, outstanding graphics and animation, and tricky puzzles wrapped in an action-game shell. The core mechanic, which involves maneuvering around by exploiting gravity as you bounce off a series of planetoids, seems simple (and the intuitive touch-screen controls help), but it's used to create some truly challenging levels. Deeper in, more techniques are introduced to keep things fresh. Each world is capped off with an intense boss fight that requires even faster reflexes than usual.

Recommended

DSiWARE

Battle Cry
6 4
Wild Lore
8 8
Spin Attack
6 8
Cleave
9 6
Throw Axe
6 8
Enrage
2 6
View Enemy
Help
Turn: 10

PUZZLE QUEST: CHALLENGE OF THE WARLORDS

PUBLISHER: **1ST PLAYABLE PRODUCTIONS** GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

This title made quite a splash when it was originally released four years ago—and for good reason, as it successfully combined elements from puzzle and role-playing games. I'm happy to say that Puzzle Quest is just as fun now as it was back then. It still feels like the game cheats every once in a while (or maybe I'm just not as good a player as I should be), but this is still one of the best match-three titles around. At $8, this game is well worth buying. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE

COMBO X2
$88
VIP

Good thing you're on time, boy.

VALET PARKING 1989

PUBLISHER: **ZORDIX AB**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

In this time-management game, you're tasked with parking and retrieving cars for a seemingly endless parade of customers. This type of game is generally good for a frantic rush, and Valet Parking 1989 is no different. The main problem is that little is added to the experience as you progress, resulting in a growing sense of tedium. Additionally, the story mode lacks a save function—an odd omission despite its brevity. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

LV 42
604485
MISS MISS MISS
Best Combo 1089

WHACK-A-FRIEND

PUBLISHER: **AGETEC**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Regular Whac-A-Mole gets boring after about 30 seconds. This variation, in which you take photos of friends (or whatever) and apply them to the whackable objects, gets boring after about 35 seconds. There's no challenge or variety, and the game can save only one photo. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

Adjectives
FLUFFY
MAD
BREEZY
AWESOME
FUN
ABSTRACT
PRETTY
UGLY
CRAZY
CREEPY
BIG
BLACK
BRIEF
CREDIBLE
02:23
06:17

WORD SEARCHER 3

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Taking a purist's approach to the concept, Word Searcher 3 is as straight-up as they come; you get a grid of letters, a list of words to look for (categorized into themes), and a ticking clock. 100 categories/puzzles (with variable letters grids) are offered. Whether the spartan concept works for you depends wholly on your affinity for word search, but those inclined to indulge should be wary of the value proposition; even five bucks is too much. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

PREVIEWS

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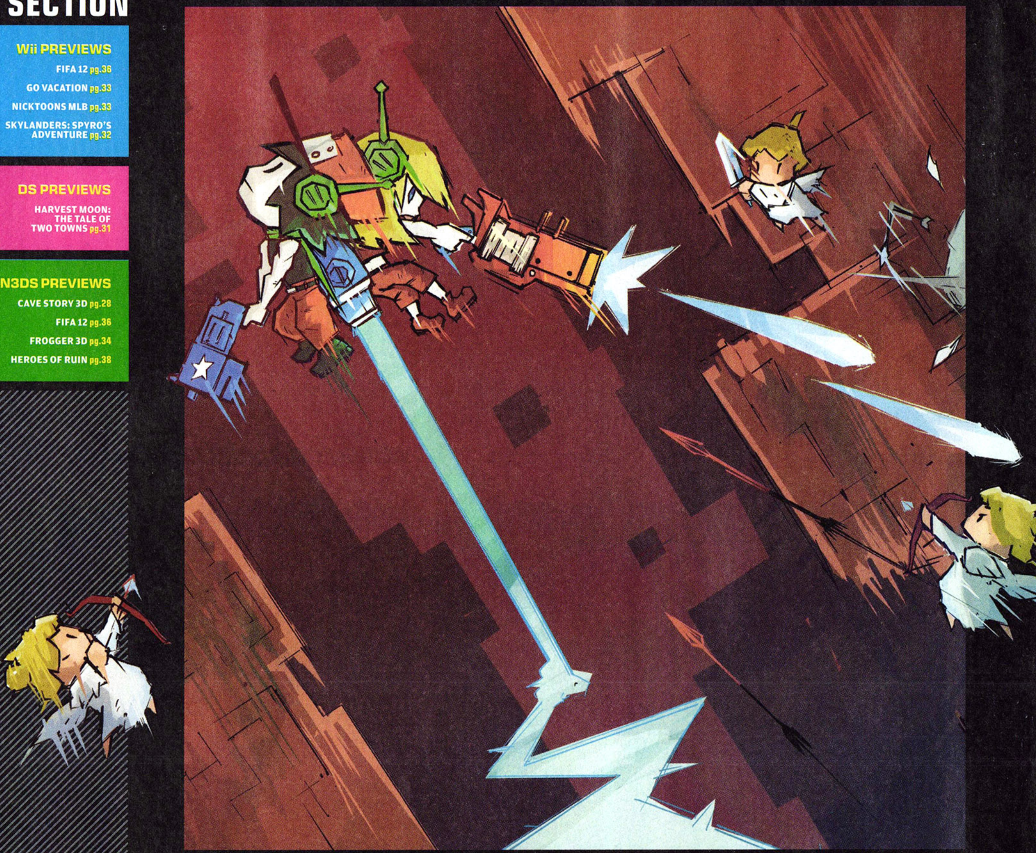
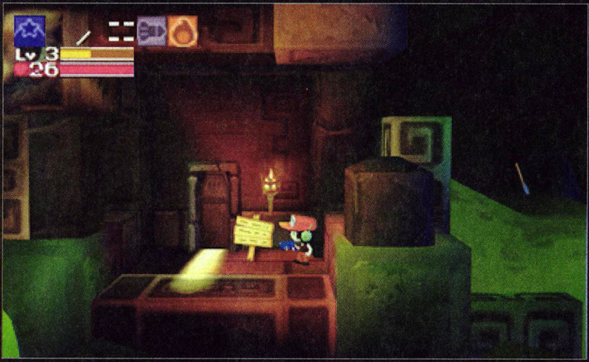
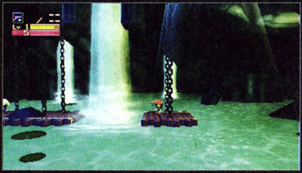


CAVE STORY 3D

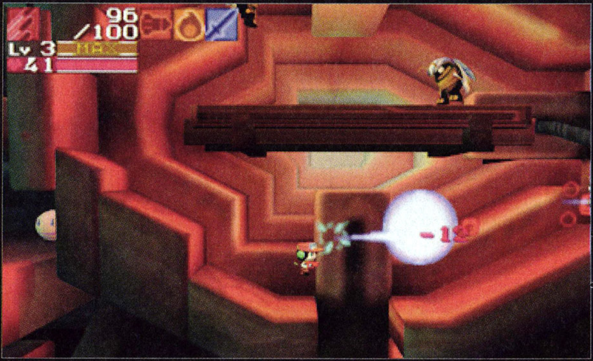
A story that seems to get better with every retelling.

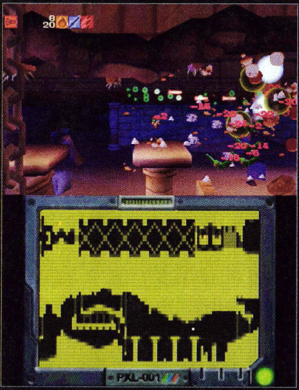


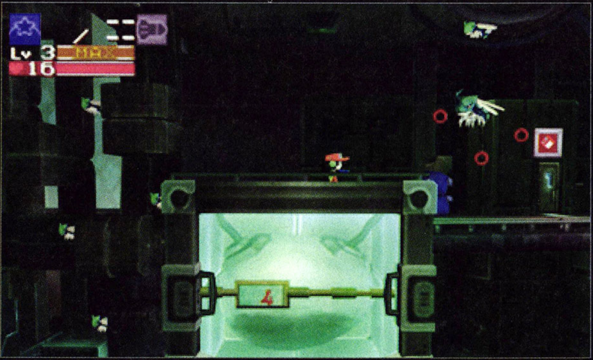


WE'RE NOT TRYING to be mean, but there might be something wrong with you if you haven't tried Cave Story already. Not only did we talk about the Metroid-style game for months before and after its release on WiiWare, but we also awarded it *two* prestigious NP Awards (Best Adventure Game and WiiWare Game of the Year). Well, if you did skip out on Cave Story (shame on you), you have yet another chance to play it—and in 3D, no less.

Similar to how the WiiWare game was a graphically upgraded version of the original PC title, Cave Story 3D improves upon the visuals yet again. The 2D characters and locales have been replaced with polygonal models, which, when combined with the 3D effect, provides a nice sense of depth. Fortunately, the game looks even better than when we first saw it; the updated version we played had its previous lighting issues mostly worked out. Speaking of the game's graphical quality, several die-hard Cave Story fans voiced their discontent with Cave Story 3D's visuals when they first saw the screenshots. We don't necessarily agree with their assessments, as this is a game that looks best when it's in motion. However, developer Nicalis has decided to





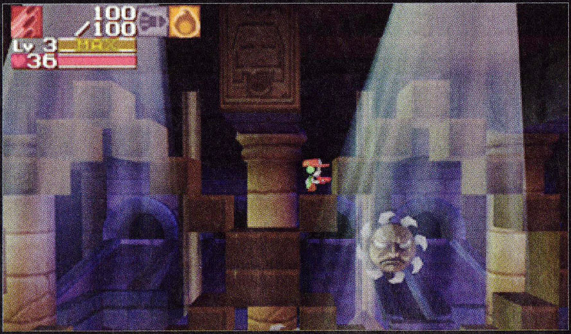


[Left] One of Cave Story 3D's most helpful new features is a persistent map on the bottom screen. Not only will it prevent you from getting lost, but it should aid you in finding hidden areas.

meet partway with those who prefer their Cave Story experience in two dimensions; Cave Story 3D includes an option to play the game with high-resolution 2D character sprites in the 3D environments.

In addition to the graphics, the music has been redone. But based on what we've played so far, it seems that everything else we liked about the WiiWare game—the platforming, the shooting, and the humor—remains intact. We played the heck out of Cave Story on WiiWare, and we can't wait to do the same with Cave Story 3D. —**JUSTIN C.**

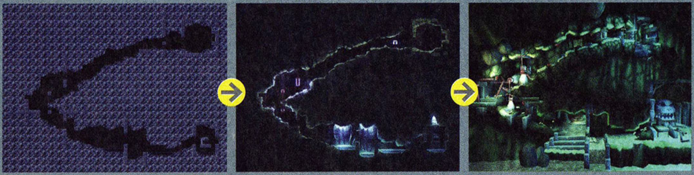
N3DS PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **NICALIS**
RELEASE: **AUGUST 2011**



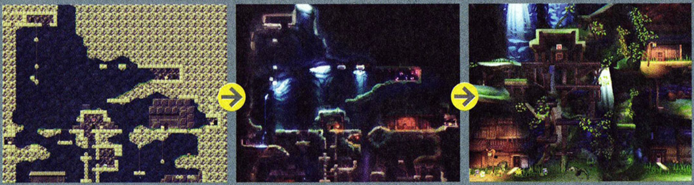
ENVIRONMENT EVOLUTION

The locales in Cave Story 3D retain the basic layouts of the original stages, but they are packed with additional detail. Here's a look at four different areas from the original Cave Story, the concept art for the Cave Story 3D versions of these areas, and the finished polygonal environments.

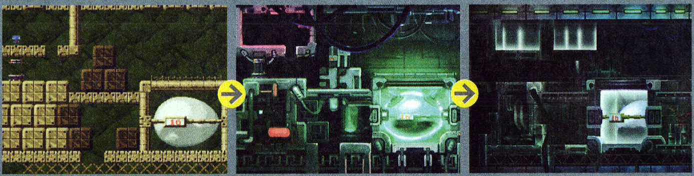
THE FIRST CAVE
Perhaps more interesting than the changes to the area itself is the evolution of the statue at the bottom of this level.



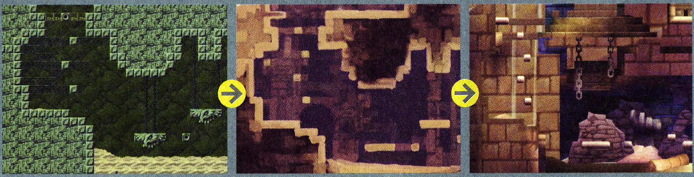
MIMIGA VILLAGE
The 3D-ified village feels less sterile than the original 2D one, in part due to the abundance of lush vegetation.

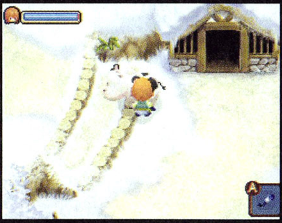


EGG CORRIDOR
Welcome to the world of tomorrow! Marvel at the giant eggs and at all the futuristic bits and bobs.

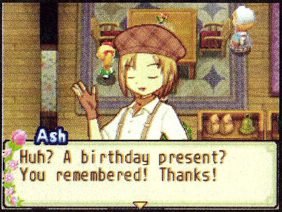


SAND ZONE
The original version of this level wasn't that sandy, but Anakin Skywalker would be whinier than ever in the new one.



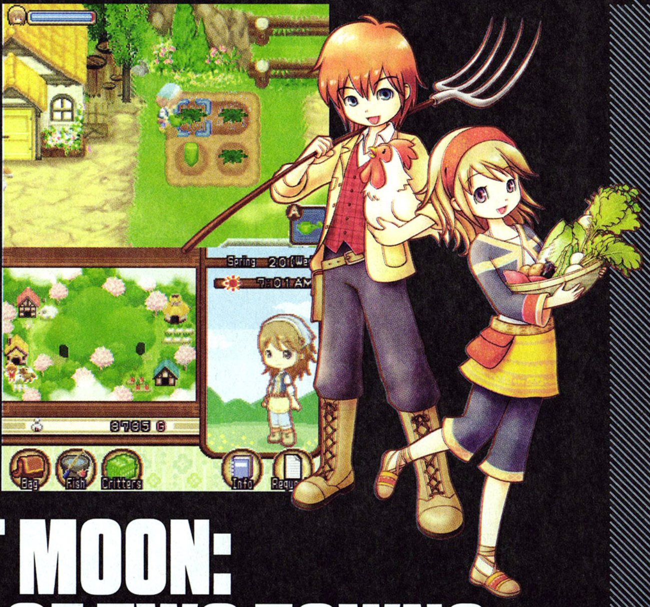


[Above] Even the chill of winter can't stop you from milking your favorite heifer.



Ash

Huh? A birthday present?
You remembered! Thanks!



HARVEST MOON: THE TALE OF TWO TOWNS

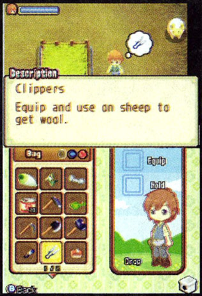
Natsume was into farming before farming was cool.

THE TIMES—THEY change. In 1997 people scratched their heads and chuckled at this Super NES game that was about, of all things, farming. Fast-forward a few years, and the series has garnered a substantial following and appeared on practically every gaming console out there. Such is the hidden appeal of agriculture.

Harvest Moon has hung around for nearly 15 years now and shows no signs of slowing down, with another trip to the farm due out this summer. Make that *farms,* actually—The Tale of Two Towns begins with a choice between two different spreads that lead to different ways of playing the early stages of the game.

Each town favors its own style of farming: Bluebell, a quaint Old World place, is built around raising animals. The Asian-flavored village of Konohana, on the other hand, focuses on cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and grains. In other words, depending on what you liked in the previous Harvest Moon games—growing crops or keeping livestock—you can pick a farm that offers a head start. Settling in Bluebell, for instance, provides you with some starter animals that would take time to afford in earlier games. Because you have the option to switch villages between seasons, the two-village setup doesn't seem to limit the game so much as conveniently narrow the focus. With fewer goals and tasks around the farm to juggle right away, there's more time for gathering items in the mountains, meeting people around town, learning recipes for cooking and crafting, and doing all the other random stuff on the side that's always added flavor to Harvest Moon.

On that score, there's a lot to explore in the two towns, and there's particular importance to a cooking contest for farm-to-fork chefs. That competition is the key to reuniting the rival villages, who've been feuding for years over their culinary reputations. If that sounds pretty silly, well... yeah, it kind of is, but Harvest Moon has a way of making odd ideas work. People laughed back in '97, but now Harvest Moon is about to conquer an all-new system—alongside the Nintendo DS version, an edition of the game is in the works for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. **—DAVID S.**



Description

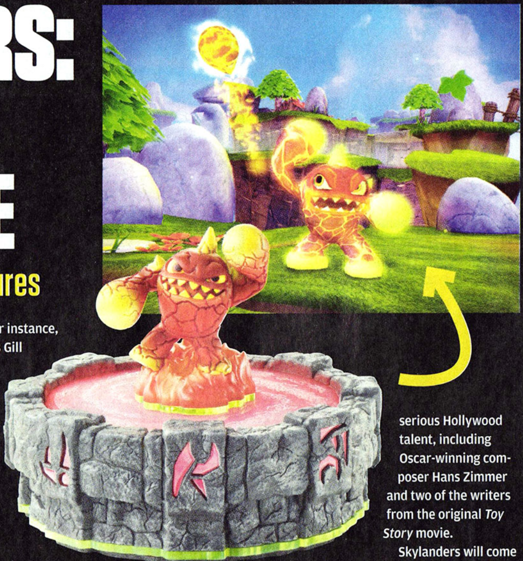
Clippers

Equip and use on sheep to get wool.

DS PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS ENT.**
RELEASE: **FALL 2011**

SKYLANDERS: SPYRO'S ADVENTURE

Putting the action in action figures



WHEN YOU SEE Skylanders for the first time, you'll likely ask yourself, "Why hasn't anyone done this before?" Combining video games with action figures seems like such a no-brainer. Since it's coming from Activision, cynics might dismiss it as just another attempt by the publisher to sell plastic doodads, but unlike, say, Tony Hawk: Ride, this is actually a pretty cool idea.

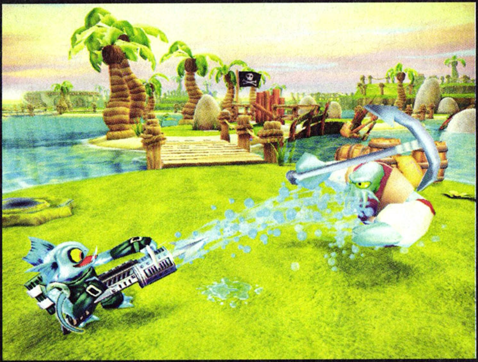
It revolves around a sensor peripheral dubbed the Portal of Power. When you place a Skylanders action figure on the portal's surface, you'll immediately take control of that character in the game. Each hero offers unique attacks and abilities, which means that some are better suited to a given task than others. Spyro's fireballs make him an effective long-range fighter, for instance, while the amphibious Gill Grunt can traverse water to access areas beyond the purple dragon's reach. As you progress, you'll be able to power up those abilities, as well as outfit your characters with various accessories. Such enhancements are automatically saved to the action figure's built-in memory, so you can import your buffed-up hero to a friend's portal for co-op play and arena battles.

The game itself is an action-adventure that mixes combat with light puzzle-solving and exploration elements. It's got a goofy cartoon charm that should appeal to its intended audience, though as long-time fans of Spyro, we're a bit puzzled and disappointed by his new pug-nosed look. Also worth noting is that Skylanders isn't really a sequel to previous Spyro games; the developers view it more as a stand-alone product. It does follow in its predecessors' footsteps by boasting some serious Hollywood talent, including Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer and two of the writers from the original *Toy Story* movie.

Skylanders will come with a Portal of Power and three action figures for $69.99, and each additional figure (32 in all) will cost about eight bucks. If the game is a success, Activision will consider bringing the concept to other franchises. My 10-year-old self would have killed for a Transformers version. (And my 32-year-old self still might.)
—STEVE T.

Wii
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **TOYS FOR BOB**
RELEASE: **FALL 2011**

[Right] Remind us never to invite Gill Grunt to a squirt-gun fight.



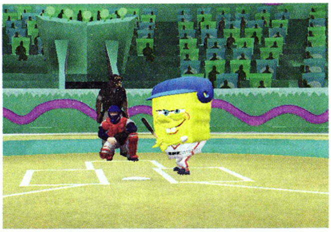
NICKTOONS MLB

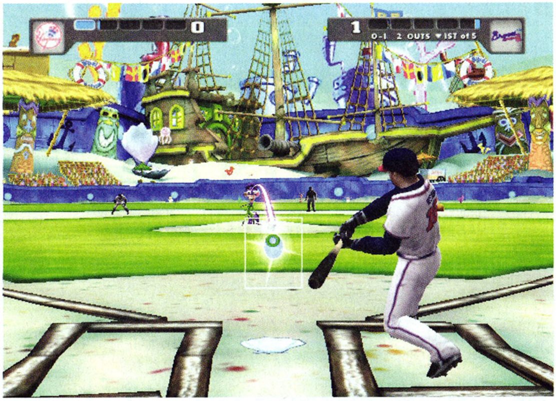
Maybe the Twins can sign Dudley Puppy to play shortstop.

In what has to be one of the most bizarre mashups we've ever seen, the Nicktoons are taking the field to compete alongside MLB stars like Joe Mauer and Cliff Lee. As you might imagine, what ensues isn't exactly a hardcore baseball sim. In fact, it uses the same engine as 2K's arcade-inspired The Bigs franchise and borrows many of the same over-the-top antics. That includes a turbo meter that allows for nigh-unhittable pitches and surefire home runs. Venues consist of six MLB stadiums and six Nick-themed parks, with the latter boasting such interactive elements as a cannon that occasionally fires long balls back onto the field. The whole enterprise is every bit as weird as it sounds, but if nothing else, we've learned that SpongeBob throws a mean cutter and Stimpy tends to crowd the plate. A version of Nicktoons MLB is also coming to the Nintendo DS handheld, courtesy of developer Black Lantern. —**STEVE T.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **2K PLAY**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
RELEASE: **AUGUST 2011**

[Right] Why is SpongeBob SquarePants smiling? The fact that he's 90 percent cranium means he has the smallest strike zone ever.



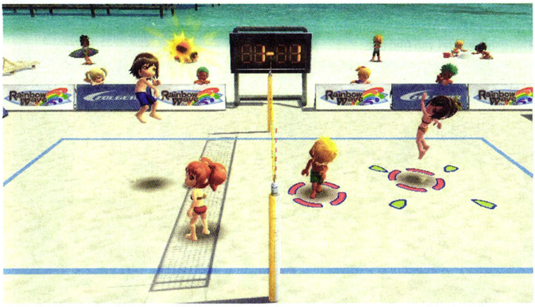


GO VACATION

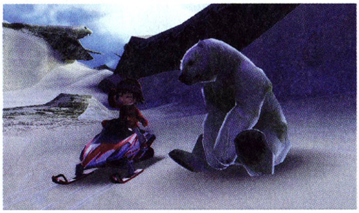
Who wants pie?

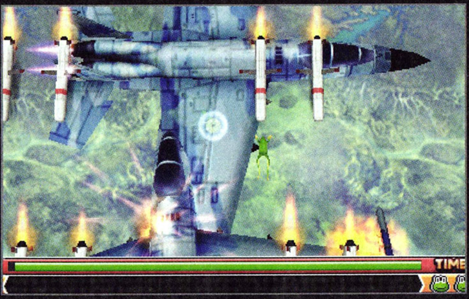
Have you ever wanted to throw snowballs, race personal watercraft, play tennis, or dodge thrown pies? Well, you and up to three friends can do all these things and more in Go Vacation. Reminiscent of Wii Sports Resort, this title has you vacationing on Kawawii Island, a place that has snow, a mountain, a beach, and a city. We tried nine events: Water Gun Battle, Beach Volleyball, Sky Diving, Snowball Fight, Pie Throwing, Target Shooting, Marine Bike Races, Table Hockey, and Tennis. Although Pie Throwing is a rather simple game—you hold the remote vertically and tilt left or right to dodge the incoming desserts—it's our favorite due to its sense of humor. First, the game is all about pie, which is almost always amusing. Second, you can obtain a power-up—a pair of sunglasses—that when activated by pressing A, allows you to dodge the pastries, *Matrix*-style. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE: **FALL 2011**



[Below right] It's not a proper vacation until you've been accosted by a large polar bear.



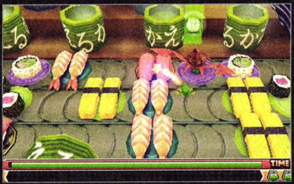


FROGGER 3D

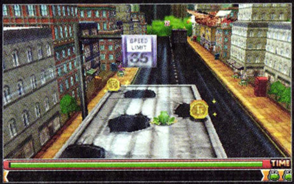
Why did the frog cross the road? To get to its anniversary party.

THERE HAVE BEEN a lot—and I mean *a lot*—of attempts to revitalize the Frogger franchise over the years, but most of them have been utterly forgettable. Frogger 3D, which is being released in commemoration of the original game's 30th anniversary, looks like it might be able to reverse that trend by sticking to Frogger's roots. While some Frogger revivals have attempted to turn the property into a mascot-driven platformer, this one keeps it simple: just like in the original, you're a frog trying to get home, and you're gonna do it with little more than the ability to hop in four directions.

That's not to say that Frogger 3D is just a prettied-up version of the coin-op classic; far from it. For one thing, Frogger 3D is much more expansive. The game features multiple worlds—including New York City, a Las Vegas-style metropolis (complete with interactive casinos), and a military base—with numerous levels in each. These levels are much more alive than those in vintage Frogger thanks to dynamic elements such as car crashes and huge semi trucks that destroy everything in their path, and the stages contain a variety of new obstacles, including horizontally and vertically moving traffic, multitiered freeways, steamrollers, and river barges. There are even boss stages, including a showdown on a roulette table and a level in which you must use spiked blocks to blow out a big rig's tires. Luckily, there are helpful components as well: crates that you can climb atop to increase your jump distance, for example, and friendly frogs that you can temporarily ride on to destroy enemies or clear gaps.



[Above] Ever wondered how frog legs would go with sushi? This game will let you find out.

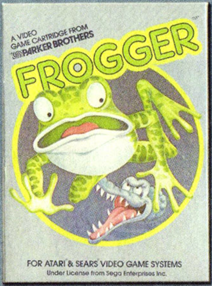


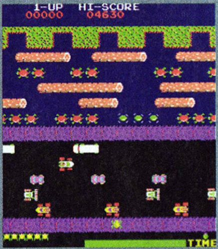
In addition to the standard single-player mode, the game features a challenge mode (offering tougher versions of each stage), a multiplayer mode, StreetPass functionality, and an endless mode. Essentially a constantly looping version of the original arcade Frogger, the endless mode should be especially enticing for old-school fans who want to test their skills. —**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **ALPHA UNIT**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2011**

THE FIRST—AND STILL THE BEST

Even though Frogger has been around for 30 years, the arcade original is still arguably the best title in the series. Despite its simplicity, the gameplay has proven incredibly addictive, and the title has been ported to countless platforms, including the Atari 2600 and the Super NES. Fortunately, Frogger 3D borrows heavily from its classic ancestor.


A VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE FROM PARKER BROTHERS
FROGGER
FOR ATARI & SEARS VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS
Under License from Sega Enterprises Inc.



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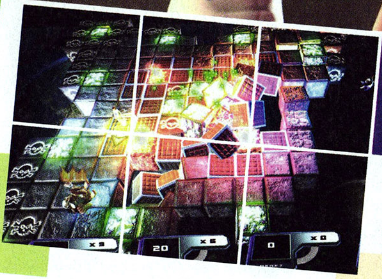

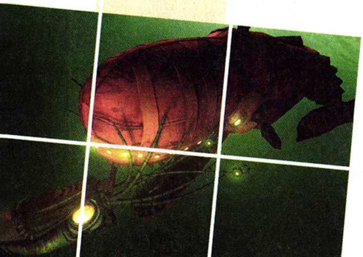

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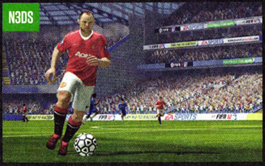
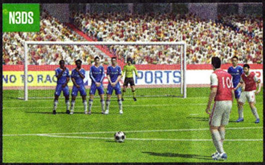
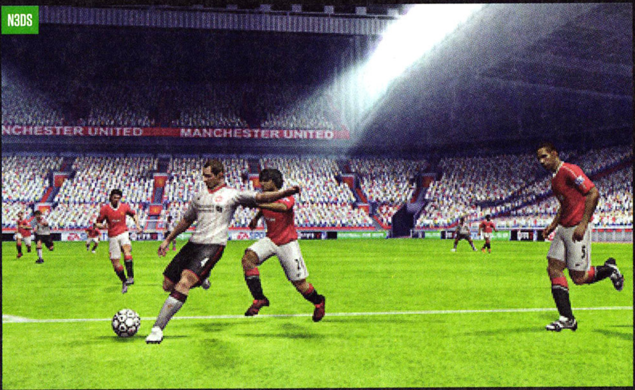


[Below] Set pieces will benefit from greater precision thanks to touch-screen controls.



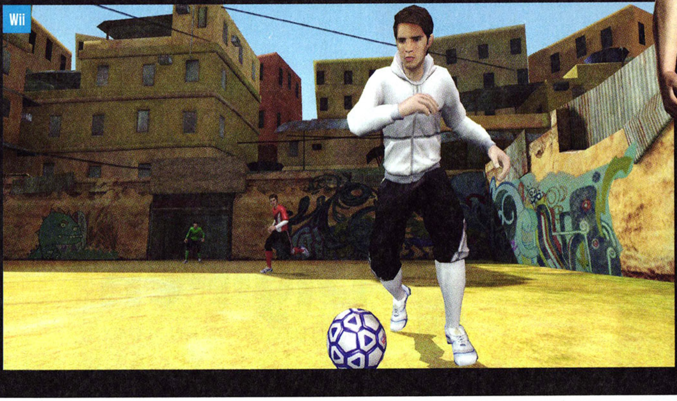


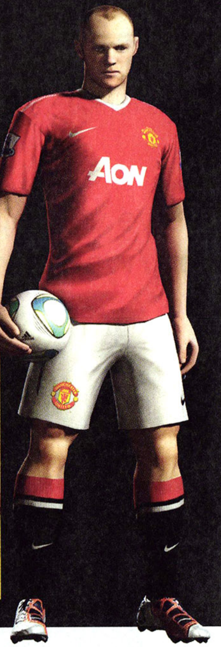
FIFA 12

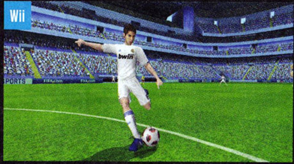
EA Canada is digging deep for FIFA's next season.

HAVING GIVEN KONAMI'S Pro Evolution Soccer a firm boot to the groin, EA's FIFA finds itself in the perilous position of competing mostly with itself these days; each year, the FIFA faithful must be convinced that last year's game is obsolete. To that end, developer EA Canada invited us to their campus in Burnaby, BC to preview FIFA 12 on Nintendo 3DS and the Wii console. Our take-away? Footie fans have much to look forward to.

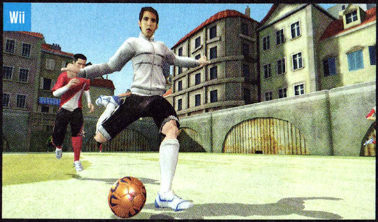
The N3DS team, naturally, has focused heavily on exploiting the hardware capabilities of Nintendo's latest handheld. Sports games can benefit greatly from the hardware's stereoscopic effect, and the implementation here is particularly thoughtful; for example, the pitch in Street mode has been curved slightly to maximize visual depth in the mode's smaller arena. Additionally, the camera system has been retooled to improve players' prospects for finding a desirable view. (PES 2011's lack of choice in that regard is an obvious shortcoming in Konami's effort.) Respect has also been paid to the handheld's input potential; players have the option to aim shots and set pieces with newfound precision via touch-screen control. The touch-screen implementation for taking shots is particularly interesting; within range, the handheld's lower screen changes to a depiction of the opposing goal from the ball handler's perspective, inviting players to aim and set power by pressing their desired destination in the net. The resulting shot is a combination of the touch-screen input, the in-game footballer's shot-related stats, and the circumstances of the attempt. For those of us who've long felt disconnected from the outcomes of our attempts on goal, this iteration of FIFA offers a unique opportunity







Player likenesses on the Wii console are vastly improved this time around.



to feel responsible for successes and failures.

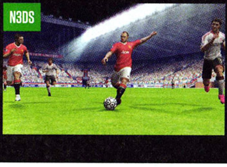
In addition to its gamut of spec-related upgrades, FIFA 12 for N3DS will feature considerably more content than FIFA 11 for DS did, starting with the inclusion of the aforementioned five-versus-five Street mode. Thanks to that mode's inclusion, Be a Pro mode—in which players take a single footballer from obscurity to national eminence—has expanded to start at the street level. Career mode, too, will be substantially deeper, and will resemble the robust organization-simulation experience of Manager mode on Wii (detailed shortly). Without a doubt, there will be much to do, and that breadth of play—combined with visuals well beyond anything seen in the DS days—might just pull off the previously unthinkable: a handheld sports game that approaches the grandeur of a console experience. (Of course, we won't know for sure until we've put the game's AI through its paces.) EA's ambition on that front will be evident on the game's release date; a downloadable patch will account for any kit and/or roster changes that occur between the game's finalization and its release.

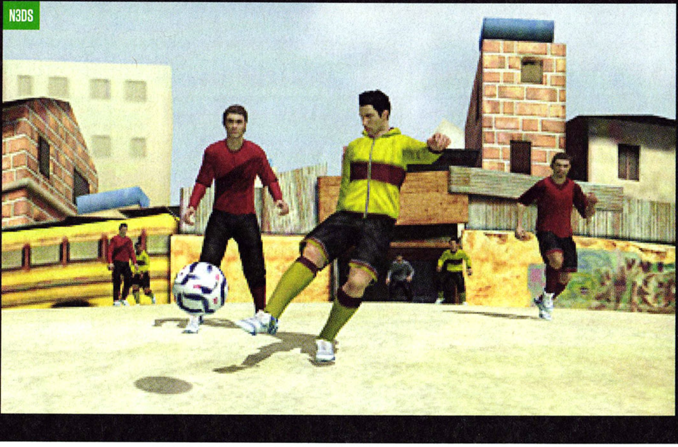
It's tempting to argue that FIFA 12 for Nintendo 3DS is *obviously* going to be great; this is *FIFA* making a generational leap, after all. But EA Canada's Wii team doesn't have it so easy, as the console's hardware potential is largely tapped out. (Though it should be noted this hasn't stopped the developers from greatly improving the game's facial likenesses and rolling motion-capture advancements into the mix.) The appeal of FIFA 12 on Wii depends wholly on ideas.

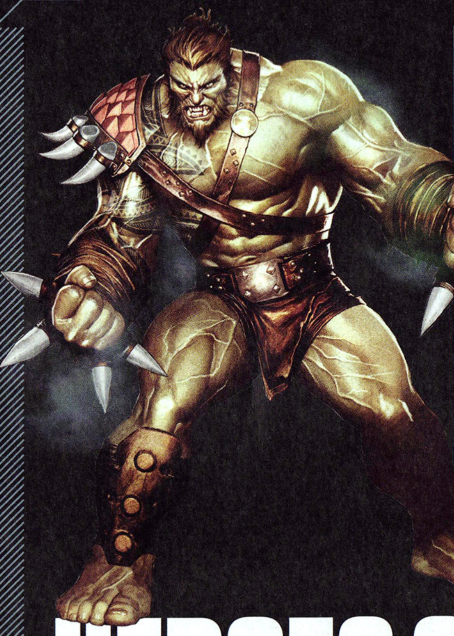
Fortunately, there are some pretty good ones. The Wii team can be forgiven for trending FIFA in a casual direction these last two years (the move fit the narrative of the system's success), but the developers hope to make nice with FIFA's hardcore base by bringing back the depth last seen on Wii in FIFA 09. In response to fan outcry, they've included the Be a Pro play style, which locks the camera to a single footballer's perspective. Players will also have the opportunity to design their own tactics and conditional formations. Most significantly, the relatively shallow Battle for Glory mode has been replaced with a revamped Manager mode that recaptures the depth of its implementation in FIFA 09; highlights include playing as a new or established manager (your choice dramatically impacts your objectives), the option of importing your player from Streets to Stadiums mode to continue your career as either a manager or player/manager, a system for upgrading facilities and guiding player training to shape your club's development, a scouting mechanic geared toward discovering future superstars, and (due to popular demand) job offers and requests—so players won't be forced to stay with the same organization season after season.

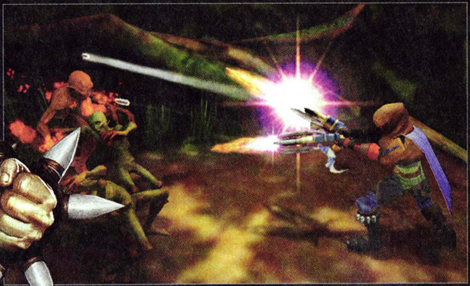
Additionally, the Wii version features a promising (and wholly unique) metagame designed to reward players for advancing their overall progress. The main menu takes the form of an animated city divided into sectors representing the game's modes. As players advance through a given mode, the corresponding area of the city screen develops. (For example, if a player purchases medical facilities in Manager mode, those facilities appear graphically in the Manager-mode sector of their city.) City development leads to population growth, which bolsters the status of the city's home team (chosen by the player). The maturation of the city's team plays out in tournaments against other "soccer cities," first at the street level, then in stadium play. Only extended play time with the new metagame will test its worth, but kudos to EA Canada's Wii team for doing something undeniably new with the long-standing FIFA franchise. —PATRICK C.

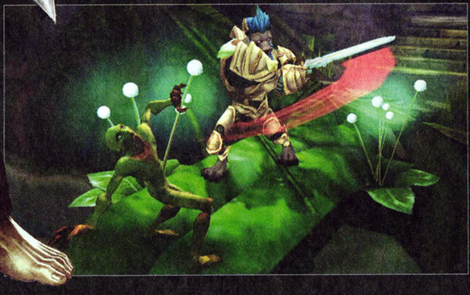
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
Wii N3DS **DEVELOPER:** **EA CANADA**
RELEASE: **FALL 2011**











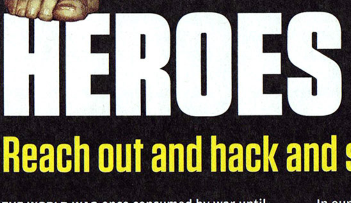
HEROES OF RUIN

Reach out and hack and slash with someone.

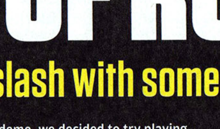
THE WORLD WAS once consumed by war until a group of lords brought peace to the land. But the peace didn't last, as one of the lords fell under a curse. Now it's up to four heroes—a sword-brandishing Vindicator, a pistol-toting Gunslinger, a magic-wielding Alchitect, and a fist-swinging Savage—to find the cure. Accomplishing this task is, of course, not as simple as it sounds. After all, there are quests to complete, dynamically generated dungeons to explore, monsters to slay, and loot to acquire.

In our demo, we decided to try playing as the Vindicator—partially because he was the first option and partially because he's a cat-man. After customizing his appearance—altering aspects such as his hairstyle and skin (or fur) color—we set out into a forest to eliminate an evil tree called Bloodoak. The minute we entered the forest, we were greeted by zombie-esque baddies; a couple quick slashes with the sword (tap B) and some mana-consuming special attacks (assigned to Y, X, and A) make short work of them. The defeated foes drop new equipment and potions to replenish your health and mana. We continued along through the labyrinthine forest until we faced off against the massive Bloodoak. Going at Bloodoak head-on is a recipe for disaster; instead, we rolled out of the way (tap R) when he charged at us, then struck the weak spot on his arm.

All this isn't terribly different from other action-RPGs on the market, but what sets Heroes of Ruin apart is its wireless functionality. In addition to drop-in and drop-out local-wireless and online co-op for up to four players, the game supports both StreetPass and SpotPass. StreetPass allows you to buy and sell items with other players; with SpotPass, you can acquire new challenges and rare items. Furthermore, you can get daily challenges and quests via the Heroes of Ruin community website. —**JUSTIN C.**



[Below] It's all fun and games until someone gets crushed by a giant, walking plant monster.



N3DS
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
RELEASE: **2012**

“DID SOME-BODY PAGE THE KING OF AWE-SOME?”

—BOWSER, MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER’S INSIDE STORY, 2009

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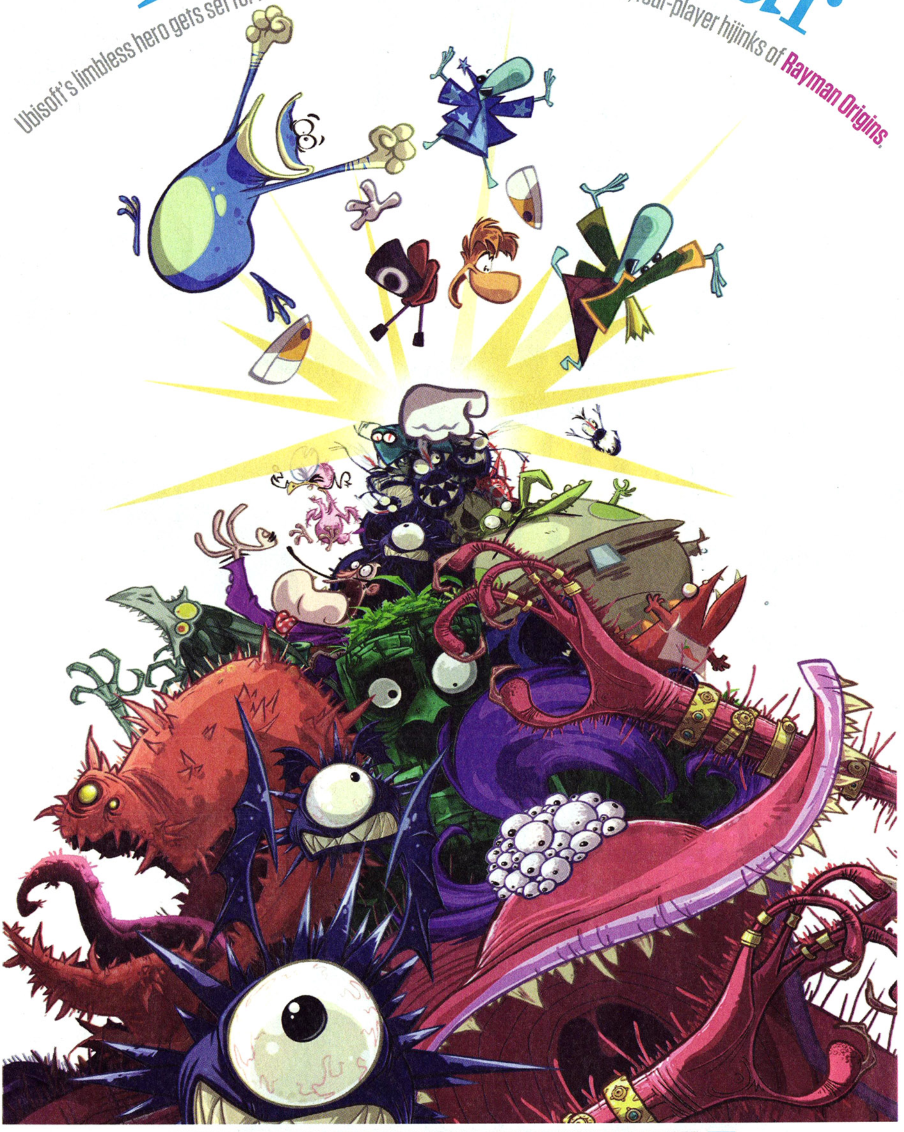
Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

The Art of Four

Ubisoft's limbless hero gets set for his triumphant return in the beautifully illustrated, four-player hijinks of **Rayman Origins**.



BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT** DEVELOPER: : **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2011** Wii

It was just about five years ago that Nintendo Power put Rayman Raving Rabbids on our cover, and I happened to be the author of that story as well. In preparation for the piece, I traveled to Ubisoft's Montpellier studio to check out the game and chat with Rayman creator Michel Ancel. At that point in development, the vision for Rabbids was pretty ambitious, mixing deep 3D platforming with the ability to ride all sorts of giant beasts, plus motion-centric minigames intended to provide the occasional diversion. It all sounded great, and Ancel's enthusiasm for the game was infectious. I came away from that visit fully expecting our cover subject to be the crème of the Wii launch crop. But when Rabbids came in for review, all of the platforming and beast-riding was gone; all that remained were the minigames. Presumably in the rush to make launch, Ubisoft had drastically scaled back the project. The final product certainly wasn't bad—and the Rabbids franchise went on to become hugely successful for the publisher—but nor was it the full-blown Rayman masterpiece I was hoping for.

Cue Rayman Origins, a brand-new offering spearheaded by Ancel and a small group of passionate colleagues. This time around, there's no console launch date to meet and no minigames in sight; just an opportunity for some of the industry's greatest craftsmen to finally deliver that Wii masterpiece.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

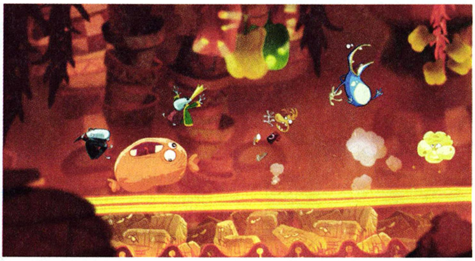
True to its title, Origins marks a return to the franchise's 2D platforming roots. The core gameplay should be comfortably familiar to anyone who's played Rayman's 1995 debut (or just about any traditional platformer, for that matter). In a first for the series, however, up to four people can join the festivities, dropping in or out at any time. Exactly how that experience unfolds largely depends on the temperament of your fellow Wii travelers. Naturally, there are plenty of opportunities for cooperation. Characters can climb on top of each other, for example, to nab hard-to-reach items or scale tall cliffs. If, on the other hand, you're feeling a little less kumbaya, you can just smack each other around. Doing so doesn't cause any direct damage, but it can mess up another player's jump or knock him into harm's way. Most importantly, it's quite often hilarious (for everyone but the smackee, at least).

Should you cause a partner's demise, you can always make up for it by bringing him back to life. Reminiscent of New Super Mario Bros. Wii, defeated heroes float around the screen like balloons, and popping them immediately returns your allies to action. In turn, that allows players of varying skill levels to team up and have a good time. If Grandpa (or your editor-in-chief) doesn't have the platforming chops to get past a particularly tough stretch, he can just float along while you take care of it.

ART EXPEDITION

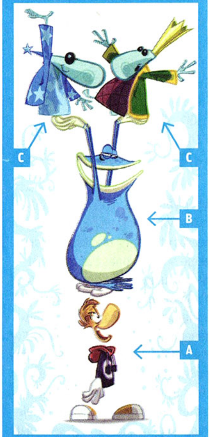
Playing with friends and family is great and all, but the main attraction here just might be the jaw-dropping visuals. If you think that sounds shallow, take another gander at those screenshots. The game really looks like that—and even better when you see it in motion! A new proprietary engine called UbiArt Framework allows the team's artists and illustrators to import their work directly into the game. (For more on how those tools function, see our interview with Ancel on page 44.) The result is one beautiful vista after another, each bristling with fantastic animation and creativity. During our demo, we traversed a lush jungle where flocks of butterflies fluttered around our heroes, and silhouetted shapes rustled menacingly in the foreground. Nothing about this world is plain or ordinary; sausage platforms grimace when you jump on them, and you swing not from vines, but the long beards of floating monks. Each of the game's heroes does everything in his own unique way, as well, whether it's Rayman hovering around via his trademark "hairlicopter" or Globox hanging from ledges by his teeth. Even the enemies show tons of personality; we caught one tormenting some Lums by rubbing the adorable little critters under his armpit. The whole thing has a manic, cartoon sensibility, punctuated by over-the-top sound effects that would seem right at home in a Bugs Bunny short.

We also had an opportunity to tackle one of the game's boss encounters, in which Rayman and company must flee a huge, carnivorous plant whose gaping maw sometimes fills half the screen. Most of the pursuit involves moving vertically through a cavern, avoiding hazards and jumping



[Right] The food level may be one of the strangest things we've ever seen in a video game. Not pictured: an homage to Tetris in the form of ice cubes.

MEET THE TEAM

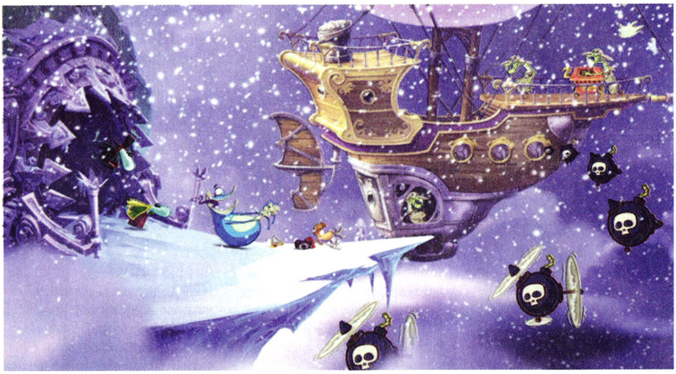


Each of the four playable characters in Rayman Origins has the same gameplay capabilities, but they're quite different in terms of personality and the way they interact with the world. Don't go making your choice willy-nilly!

A. RAYMAN
The star of the franchise has never looked better. In Origins he's tasked with amusing the Bubble Dreamer diety to put a stop to the poor guy's nightmares and save the Glade of Dreams.

B. GLOBOX
Rayman's trusty sidekick is back after a long hiatus, and he doesn't seem to be nearly as cowardly as when we last saw him. The lovable oaf's hilarious animations could make him as popular a choice as Rayman.

C. TEENSIES
First introduced in Rayman 2, the Teensies are getting in on the action this time around. They're cute, but let's face it: they are to Origins what Toads are to Mario. We expect fights to break out over who has to play as them.



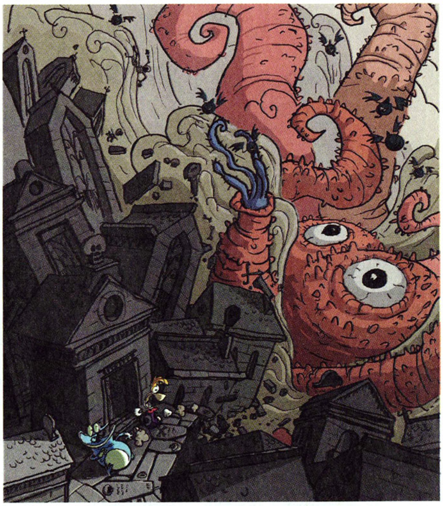
from one crumbling platform to the next as quickly as possible. It offers a serious challenge, especially if you're tempted to collect the Lums deviously placed along the way. (The bright-yellow beings serve as the game's currency.)

The final product will comprise more than 60 levels divided across six themed worlds—jungle, music, food, mountain, ocean, and picture. It's further split into three "phases," as the developer calls them. The first is a linear progression through all six worlds, and completion of each world will earn players a new power, such as the ability to dive underwater or to change the size of your character. After phase one is finished, phase two commences with new stages for each world, which you can tackle in any order. Completing those unlocks the game's ending, as well as phase three—known as the Land of the Dead. That's where things really get hairy, with trials specifically designed to challenge the very best players. And as anyone who's played the first Rayman can tell you, Ubisoft Montpellier knows how to provide a challenge.

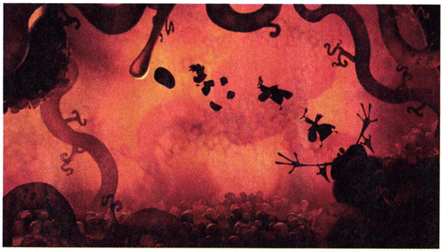
LENDING A (DISEMBODIED) HAND

Even before reaching phase three, however, experienced platforming fans should find plenty to sink their teeth into. As with previous Rayman releases, for instance, there are hidden Electoon cages scattered all over the world. In the case of Origins, each cage is sequestered in its own secret room and there are five per level. Not only do you have to find the rooms, but you must defeat all of the enemies inside before you can free the friendly Electoons, which show their appreciation by joining our heroes in an amusing little victory jig. (During our demo, we also got a kick out of a secret room that required launching Rayman into a makeshift house to reach the enemies inside; someone at Ubisoft Montpellier is a fan of Angry Birds.) Liberating all of the Electoons in a level will reward players with various unlockables, though the developers won't get into specifics just yet.

Also interspersed throughout are Death Medallions that unlock stages in the Land of the Dead.



Ubisoft hasn't released any in-game visuals from the Land of the Dead yet, but this concept art certainly has us intrigued!



Have we mentioned how beautiful this game looks?

Once acquired, some medallions also deform the surrounding terrain to reveal shortcuts, Lums, or entrances to secret rooms. Reaching the coins usually requires some tricky maneuvering or a bit of teamwork (or both). Fortunately, the game's controls are up to the task. Though still early in development, Origins has the responsiveness and precision required of a great 2D platformer, and there's a nice sense of momentum as you swing from vines, slide along streams, and bounce off assorted...bouncy things. The game will support the Classic Controller and the Wii Remote turned sideways (à la New Super Mario Bros. Wii), as well as a remote-and-Nunchuk configuration that offers some motion and pointer controls. Our demo was played entirely the old-fashioned way, as Ancel's team is still figuring out how to best take advantage of the Wii Remote controller's capabilities. Above all else, the studio doesn't want to sacrifice fluidity for the sake of cramming in gestures. If only more Wii developers showed that kind of restraint.

NEW BEGINNINGS

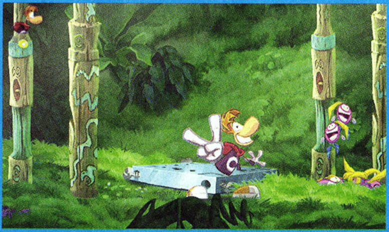
As you might have guessed from the game's moniker, all of this classic platforming goodness is couched in an origin tale. But while fans will recognize frequent nods to the limbless one's other adventures, the Montpellier team also views Origins as something of a rebirth for the series. In other words, if you've never played a Rayman game before (shame on you), this is a great time to start.

The story takes place in the idyllic Glade of Dreams, and kicks off when Rayman, Globox, and the Teensy sidekicks accidently provoke an invasion by the Glade's "downstairs" neighbors in the Land of the Dead. That upsets the Bubble Dreamer—a supreme being who dreams Rayman's world into existence with his every sleep—and his subsequent nightmares threaten to unravel the very fabric of the realm. Naturally, it's up to Rayman and friends to set things right. Other mysteries are unraveled along the way, like who imprisoned the Electoons, where the evil Mr. Dark came from, and why Rayman doesn't have any arms or legs.

The game never takes itself too seriously, of course, and at the end of the day, it's all about having lighthearted fun with friends and taking in some incredible sights. What we've played thus far certainly delivers, and we suspect the final product will stand alongside The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword as one of 2011's best Wii offerings. So welcome back, Rayman and Michel. It's good to have you guys together again!

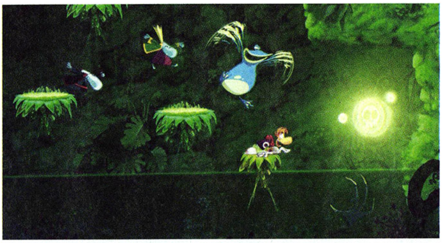
ORIGINS ON THE GO

We're pleased to exclusively reveal that Rayman Origins is also coming to the Nintendo 3DS handheld. Details remain scarce since that version isn't due until sometime next year, but Ubisoft promises that it will have all of the same content as the console game. Ancel adds, "I am excited to make a game that takes the N3DS features into account. That's something that takes a lot of time, but that's what every game should do for this kind of system. I'm excited about Rayman Origins on the N3DS!"

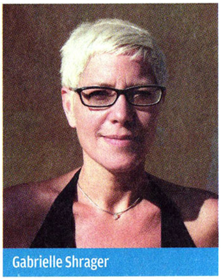


Out On a Limb

To conclude our Origins story, we spoke with two of the leading figures behind Rayman's comeback: creative director Michel Ancel and senior game writer Gabrielle Shrager.



Michel Ancel



Gabrielle Shrager

NINTENDO POWER Since this game is called Origins, let's start from the very beginning. Michel, what was your original inspiration for the Rayman series, and can you talk a little about your experience designing the very first game?

MICHEL ANCEL As a child I spent a lot of time close to the rivers, chasing strange insects, climbing on big trees.... When you're a child, everything seems huge and extraordinary. So when I began working on the first Rayman game, it all started with trees and strange creatures! At the time I was teaching myself to draw, to make music, and to write code; to realize my dream of making video games. When I was trying to get a handle on animation, I realized just how hard it is to move arms and legs convincingly! And since my imagination is always getting ahead of my ability to realize many of my ideas, I had to stick with what I could humbly get away with. This is still the case today.

If we're not mistaken, you designed the first Rayman when you were just 17 years old. What are the biggest differences between 1995's Michel Ancel and your 2011 self?

MA The big difference is that today I've got fantastic artists and engineers to make up for my shortcomings!

It's been quite some time since you last worked on a new Rayman title. Why is now the right time for you to return to the series?

MA Rayman's universe is really perfect for game creation. On one hand, you've got this very immersive universe, full of fantasy and surprises. On the other hand, you've got the simplicity of the platformer genre that forces you to focus on the gameplay, especially in 2D. After a long time spent on complex 3D games, it's really cool to jump into a full gameplay experience with no turnarounds. On top of that, the 3D consoles of today support incredible graphics and sounds in 2D. It's amazing to be able to create a universe with the quality of the best animated features, but in an interactive experience!

Perhaps you've just answered this, but what prompted you to go back to 2D after the success you had with Rayman 2?

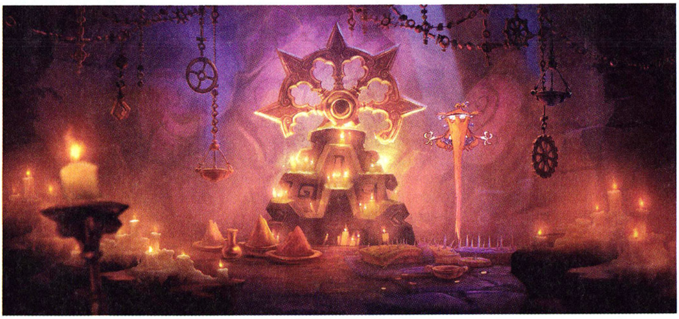
MA We began the project with this idea of going back to the artistic dimension of Rayman's universe. We wanted to work with artists outside the video game industry—people in animation studios, traditional painters and illustrators, etc. We believe that the combination of art and gameplay can create the kind of surprises that every player would like to experience.

It seems that 2D gameplay went away for a while, but recently it's come back with a vengeance. Why do you think that is?

GABRIELLE SHRAGER Since the beginning of the industry, and particularly the advent of 3D, there has been a race to create more and more photorealistic games, with more and more complicated controls and cameras. Now that we've about reached the limit of how realistic we can make games, it is interesting to see how many more creative game concepts are emerging from the woodwork—concepts that put fun and originality first and attempt to appeal to a much, much wider audience. So, this is new "old" canon—a return to pure fun with all the pluses of today's consoles!

Given the four-player aspect of Rayman Origins, there are bound to be some comparisons to New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Has that game informed development of Origins at all, and if so, what were some of the lessons that you took away from it?

MA That's funny because my first published game was a three-player puzzle-action game called The Teller on the Atari ST. I was really young and faced a lot of problems with multiplayer on the same screen. Twenty-two years later, things are the same! [Laughs] It's

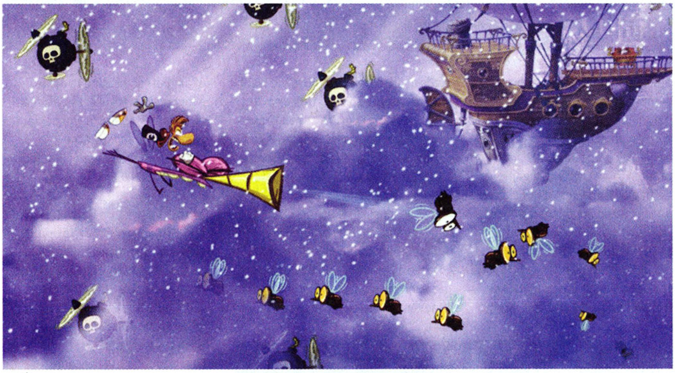


This is concept art, but we'd have a hard time discerning it from a screen shot of the corresponding area in the game.

still very challenging. I think that we face the same problems as Mario or Little Big Planet or Donkey Kong; we want everybody to play and enjoy the game at the same time even when players have different skill sets. That's a big challenge. After a lot of testing, we arrived at some results that compared to similar games but with unique features specific to Rayman Origins. For example, the fighting dimension of the game brings a lot to differentiate it from the others. In the end, we want big kids like us to be able to play with their own kids.

What made you want to make a multiplayer platformer in the first place?

MA I want people to have fun together! I want to bring people together—friends, family, even strangers. To have everyone in one room, playing together—that is what this game should be.



Which character do you typically choose when you play Origins?

MA I always change who I play, because change is good!

At certain points in the game, Rayman will hitch a ride on his old friend/nemesis Moskito. Are there any other moments like that designed to inject a bit of extra variety into the game?

GS In addition to the ride-and-shoot maps, Rayman Origins has elements of many genres, including action-adventure and beat-'em-up, which is a unique aspect of Rayman. The extra variety also comes from the fact that each new environment proposes a different kind of immersion and emotion based on its theme, its music, the living platforms, and friends and enemies you'll encounter. And, of course, the new powers you'll acquire and master really change gameplay; not to mention the bosses.

During our demo, the boss encounter was essentially a chase scene, with Rayman and company trying to escape their pursuer. Will all of the boss encounters be like that or will some of them involve direct combat? Either way, can you give us the scoop on one of the other bosses in the game?

GS Just one, OK? Nobody wants to spoil the level-end bosses—even my kids don't want to know until they can look them in the eyes! One of the other bosses is a huge zeppelin airship manned by taunting Lividstones, which you'll have to shoot down through the dangerous, steam punk-influenced world of Moody Clouds.

We've heard a lot about how the UbiArt Framework allows the team to bring their concept art directly into the game. Can you describe that process for us?

MA It's so easy my preteen daughter Chloe and teenage son were able to create their own interactive environments in just a few sessions of working with the UbiArt Framework. There's no real magic to it; we just scan or take a digital photos of the drawing, concept art, painting, clay sculpture, graffiti wall—the artist's imagination is the only limit—and put this data directly into the engine where we are able to display the art as backgrounds, animated characters, or decorative objects in real time.

What was the impetus for creating those tools? Was it specifically for Rayman, or did you decide that he would be a good fit after the fact?

MA The first Rayman was really art-oriented. We worked with artists from the cartoon industry, and painters and illustrators, and with these tools we reconnected with those people. With Rayman Origins we try to get rid of the constraints and let the artists work easily without thinking about polygons or textures or size. Just concentrate on the art.

We understand that the development team for Rayman Origins is relatively small. What's the reason for that, and does it offer certain advantages?

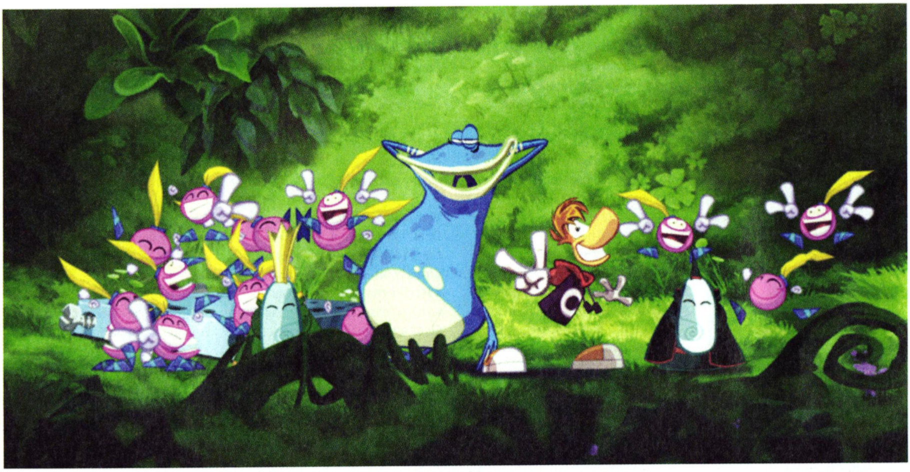
MA [Development on] Rayman Origins began two years ago with a garage-game attitude, which means a small team of artists and engineers. And small teams are flexible. We focused on creating the UbiArt Framework, which offers us an amazing amount of creative freedom as game developers. We can iterate on concepts with high-definition graphics and gameplay assets in real time. This highly reactive approach to game development helps promote creative energy and innovations. The ability to use the gorgeous hand-drawn artwork of our artists directly in-game is one of the reasons Rayman Origins looks so fresh and different. As the engine and the technology came together, it became clear to me that this was the right approach and time for Rayman to make his comeback.

Who else is working with you on this project, and what roles did they play in Ubisoft Montpellier's previous titles?

MA I feel lucky to have been joined by some fantastic developers I've worked with for years in France; top-tier engineers and artists and animators who drove the creation and development on Ubi games like King Kong, Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter, Beyond Good & Evil, the Rabbids games, the upcoming From Dust, Tintin, and other undisclosed titles...plus some great people I worked with on the Rayman games over the years! We also have a few wonderful artists from outside our industry—traditional artists from the cartoon industry, among others, who bring the warmth and freshness of lovingly hand-drawn characters.

Origins was initially announced as a downloadable title. Why was it decided to make the game a full retail release?

MA The episodic format and digital distribution were well-suited to the team size and ambition last year. But given the positive feedback from fans both in-house and out, the team realized that the timing is right for an immersive platformer,



and that the brand and the fans deserved a full-blown experience.

To your mind, what's the key to making a great platformer? What are some of your other favorites in the genre?

MA For me, the platformer genre is not different than the others. I really like the mix between immersion and gameplay. The feeling of rhythm is also very important; being able to master the control and enter into a flow of actions without being stopped. When I play, I like to be teased by the next surprise, and the surprise can be gameplay or art or both! I need both of them to feel OK with a game. Gameplay is the activity, the "how"; and art is the meaning, the "why." That's why all the games I work on have this double approach.

It seems like you're asked how Beyond Good & Evil 2 is coming along in every interview, so we'll resist doing so with this one. But the fact that you're asked that question all the time speaks to how passionate fans are about BG&E. What does that mean to you as a creator?

MA Responsibility! BG&E2 is the best game I've never done. My first dream about BG&E was to make a game with no bounds: not a shooter, not a platformer, not an adventure game. I wanted a mix of all that—something to make every player feel like it was a real experience. Again, the gameplay is the "how" and the art is the "why." This is very important for Beyond Good & Evil.

The best way to sum up Michel Ancel? This is what he sent when asked to provide a headshot for the interview.

Along those same lines, Rayman and BG&E are very different in terms of what they try to elicit from the player. Do you actively try to exercise different creative muscles in that way? And what unique challenges does each type of game present?

MA My approach is the same for both, but of course in Rayman, you expect something simpler. That's the tricky part; making it look simple but also making it more complex than expected in terms of story or challenges. That's what made Rayman 2 cool; it was more than a platformer. It was a way to enter a new world and discover crazy creatures and situations. Games have big potential to tell big stories.

Thank you so much for your time! Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about Rayman Origins?

MA We're making Rayman Origins because we love video games. We hope that comes through when you play. That's the main thing that links players and the game developers. We have fun making it and we hope you'll have as much fun playing it!

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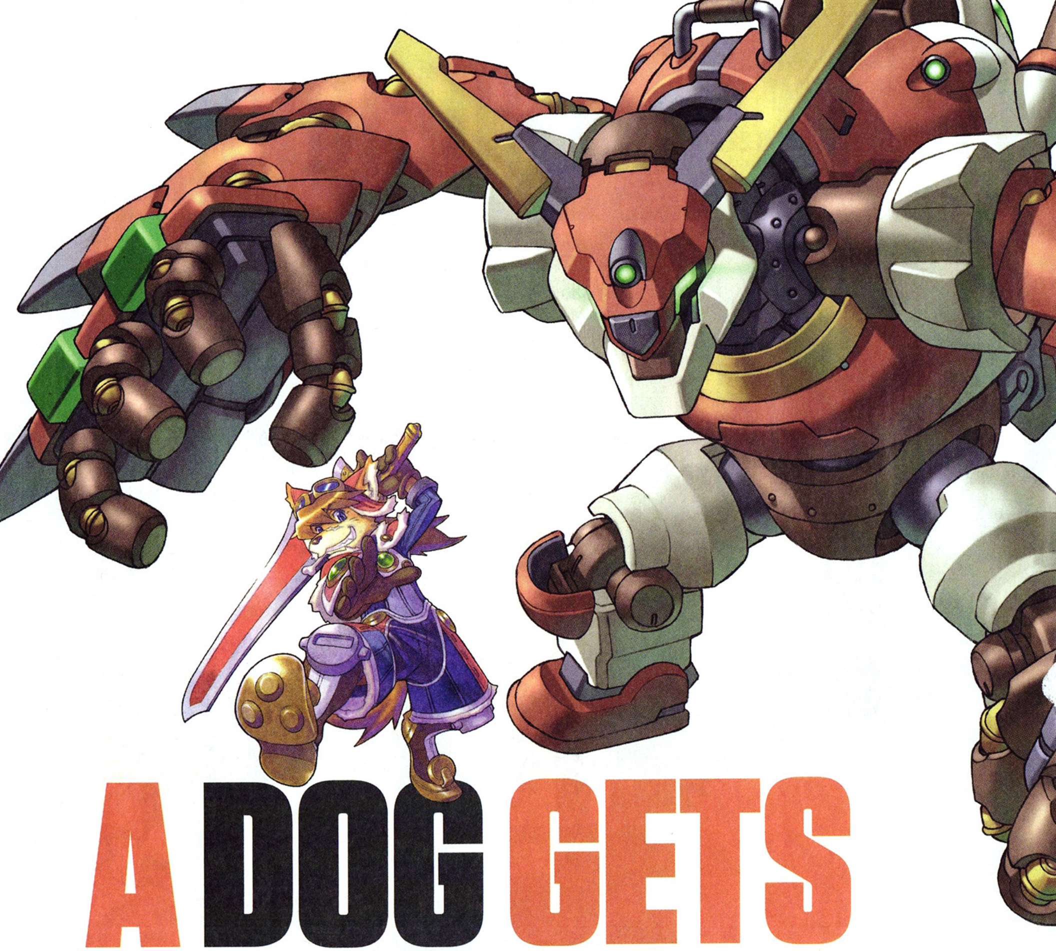


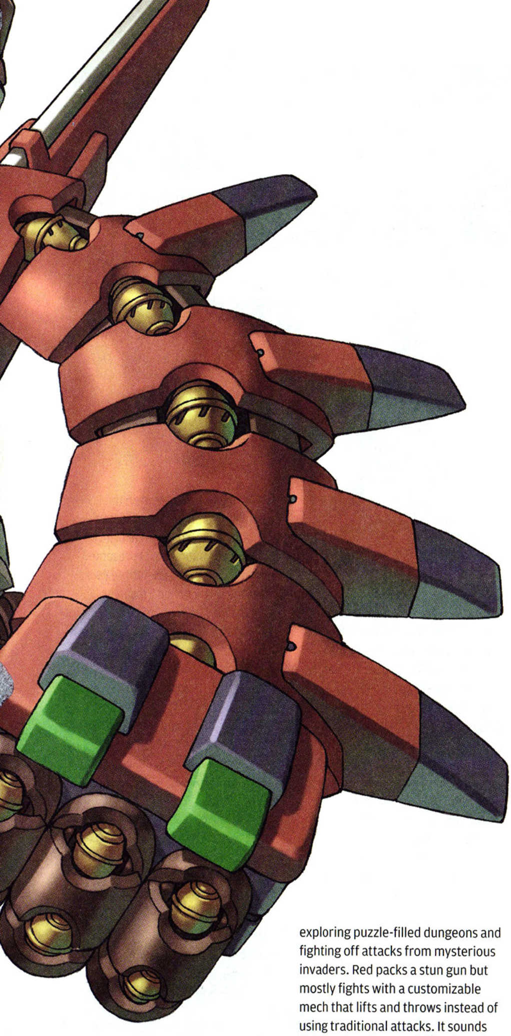
A DOG GETS HIS DAY

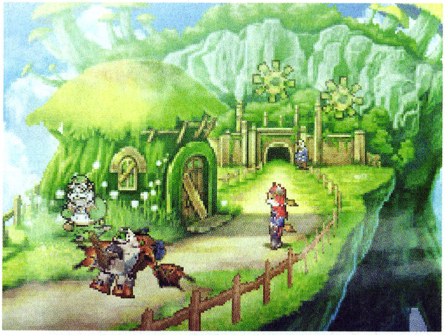
Developer CyberConnect2 spent a decade trying to make the dog-mech action-RPG of their dreams. Now Solatorobo: Red the Hunter has finally found a home on the Nintendo DS.

Cancellations and rejections are a sad fact of life in the game industry, where only a tiny fraction of proposals are ever made into games. So why has veteran developer CyberConnect2 spent a decade trying to get a single game made? "A mystery-filled adventure, a world of floating islands, winsome animal characters, cool mechs—this is what boys and girls dream about," explains CyberConnect2 president Hiroshi Matsuyama. Of course, hundreds of developers could—and do—offer similar justifications for their games. But what makes Solatorobo so special isn't the concept itself, but the passion that its developers have brought to its execution. After 10 years spent refining their proposals and fleshing out their game world, including three full years in development, Solatorobo stands as one of the most polished and inspired games on the Nintendo DS system.

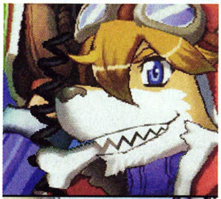
BY **CASEY LOE**

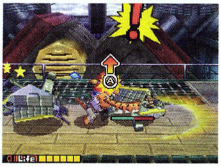
PUBLISHER: **XSEED** DEVELOPER: **CYBERCONNECT2** RELEASE: **FALL 2011** **DS**





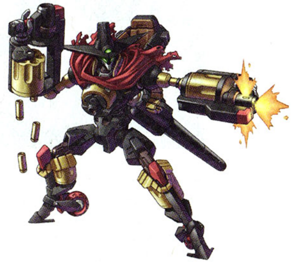
[Below] Red makes it look cool, but don't forget that excessive bone chewing can lead to chipped teeth and loose stools.





Red

When I get down to work, there's just no stopping me.



R Camera
SELECT

Solatorobo is an action-RPG set in a midair archipelagos populated by sentient, French-speaking cats and dogs who pilot mechanized robots and zeppelin-like airships. (Yes, another one of those.) You play as a dog named Red Savarin, cruising the skies with a bone between his teeth and sidekick Chocolat Gelato by his side. (She's a...Pekingese, maybe? Or a cat? Well, something cute and furry.) There are plenty of cities to visit, where Red and Chocolat can sign up for quests that involve exploring puzzle-filled dungeons and fighting off attacks from mysterious invaders. Red packs a stun gun but mostly fights with a customizable mech that lifts and throws instead of using traditional attacks. It sounds limiting, but the restriction gives the battle system a completely unique feel; instead of simply hammering out a punch-kick combo, you're dashing behind foes, yanking them off their feet, tossing them into walls, leaping into the air to catch them on the rebound, and then spiking them like a football. If a decade spent developing Naruto fighting games has taught CyberConnect2 anything, it's how to make a smooth, fast-paced, and thoroughly enjoyable combat system. Solatorobo also features a variety of flight mechanics, with jet engines and jet packs adding some range to your mech.

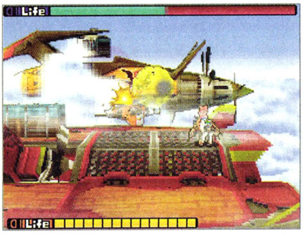
The most endearing aspect of Solatorobo is its wholly unique visual style. The game plays out in three dimensions, but is built around hand-drawn backdrops that give it a warm feel rarely seen in typically blocky and sharp-edged 3D worlds. The game's event scenes also mix 2D with 3D in a unique way, with dot-pixel art mapped to simple geometry, spanning both screens of the DS. The game's world is beautifully realized, combining the flavor of brightly colored European villas with fantastical touches like drifting airship armadas and rumbling elevated trains. It isn't hard to see how the development team fell in love with the world of Solatorobo, and why they refused to take no for an answer.

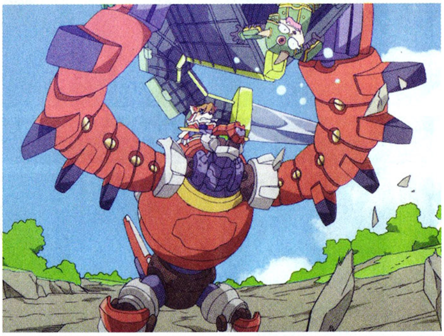
THE PROPOSAL THAT WOULDN'T DIE

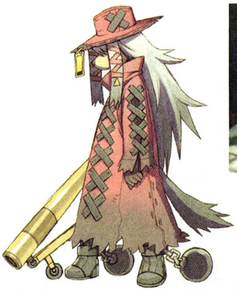
In 1996 Matsuyama's company had ten employees, one computer, and zero games under its belt. Somehow they managed to convince Bandai to fund an ambitious PlayStation action-platformer inspired by the just-released Super Mario 64. That game, titled Tail Concerto, ended up as a critical hit but a sales disappointment. (It was profitable, according to Matsuyama, but nowhere near as profitable as its publisher had

Turbo Spin
Boost
SELECT

[Right] In addition to grabbing and tossing his foes, Red can snatch their missiles in midair and throw them right back.



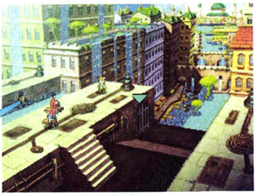


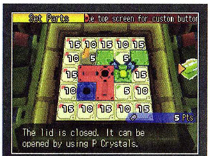


hoped.) Their second game, the classic Silent Bomber, didn't do much better, and the company soon reincorporated as CyberConnect2 and settled in for a decade of working on Bandai's franchise titles, developing eight sequels to the cult-hit RPG .hack and no fewer than 11 games based on the Naruto franchise.

But Matsuyama and his staff couldn't let go of Tail Concerto's bright world of furry heroes, European-flavored settings, and fast-paced robot action. They penned a proposal for a sequel in 1999, and when it was rejected, they revamped it and tried again. In a presentation for Japan's 2010 Computer Entertainment Developers Conference, Matsuyama recalled that a producer at Bandai tossed the second proposal into a garbage can, unread, right before his eyes. (A representative of Namco Bandai claimed that Matsuyama was only making a joke, and that they would never discard a proposal.) But despite the decisive rejections, the game kept turning up. Fans asked about it constantly, and in a 2003 hidden-ballot vote, Tail Concerto 2 was chosen by CyberConnect2 staff as the project they most wanted to pursue. In 2004, it won again. And in the strangest turn of all, CyberConnect2's home city of Fukuoka chose the company to create a public-service campaign about disaster preparedness, using characters and settings they had designed for what they had hoped would become the Tail Concerto series.

The public-service campaign taught Matsuyama that the world they had created for Tail Concerto was much broader than the game itself, and that they should be focusing on an original work instead of a straight sequel. The company also hit upon the idea of making the game on the DS—it would be their first ever title for a Nintendo platform—and tailored their pitch for the handheld. "I presented the game concept about three years after the DS launched," explains Matsuyama. "At that time there were a lot of 'serious,' nontraditional games coming out on the system, so I presented the concept with the basic theme 'People want to play real games again! Let's make them one!'" That pitch, combined with over 2,000 pieces of art illustrating the game's world and characters, finally won over a producer at the newly merged Namco Bandai. The timing definitely helped, muses Matsuyama, but he says, "you could say that our passion towards the project ultimately proved stronger than any obstacle we faced." And thus, Solatorobo was born.

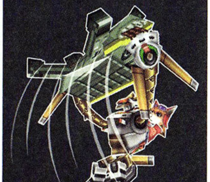




The lid is closed. It can be opened by using P Crystals.

ENHANCING YOUR MECH

In addition to the ability to gain EXP and level up, Solatorobo offers an RPG-style customization system that brings a bit of depth to the experience. Players can search the game world for P Crystals, which unlock new expansion slots in Red's mech. Once a few slots are open, players can install modules that boost basic stats or provide special abilities, such as HP regeneration. But the more powerful the module, the larger and more awkward its shape, so it'll take a bit of Tetris-style strategizing to cram in all the modules you want.



SHOOTING FOR THE SKIES

In Japanese, *Solatorobo* simply means *Sky and Robots*. "We gave the game a simple title so that when people hear it, they'll imagine riding robots and setting off on an adventure in the sky," explains Matsuyama. (A similarly evocative approach was considered for the English title, but Solatorobo had already received so much attention from Western gamers that North American publisher XSEED decided to stick with it, and simply added the "Red the Hunter" subtitle.)

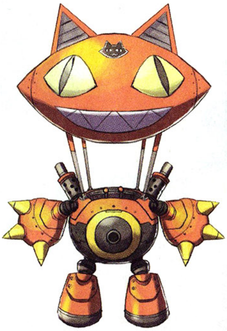
Solatorobo features the style and many of the play mechanics of Tail Concerto, but also benefited from the company taking a good, hard look at why its predecessor didn't succeed. They had targeted Tail Concerto at younger audiences, resulting in a game that looked too cute and shallow for more-experienced players, and yet had a control scheme that was too difficult for its intended audience. Matsuyama's revisions simplified the controls while adding much more depth for advanced players. "Our original plans for Tail Concerto 2 were for a simpler action-adventure game that would be set seven years after the events in Tail Concerto," explains Matsuyama. "It didn't have any of the customization, growth elements or the animated cut-scenes that you see in Solatorobo." But Matsuyama had to draw the line somewhere: Research was showing a lot of customer resistance to the game's anthropomorphized dog and cat characters. "People see animal-based characters as having a small niche following and no mainstream appeal," he admits. "But that was an integral part of our game world, so I couldn't back down."

After so many years of pent-up anticipation, the development of Solatorobo was a labor of love, stretching out for three years as the team struggled to get everything exactly right. Matsuyama personally focused on the game's unique moving-illustration event scenes, readjusting and re-creating each scene multiple times. The game also features a traditional animated opening from renowned anime studio Madhouse, and Matsuyama's team was so fond of it that they doted over the compression algorithms for weeks trying to eliminate the blocky artifacts so commonly found on DS video. When the game finally shipped, it stood as one of Matsuyama's proudest achievements. He reflects, "Compared to past titles we've developed, I'm really satisfied with how this title turned out. I'm very happy with it."

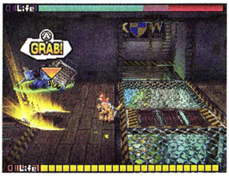
LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET

Solatorobo launched in Japan late last year, once again earning great reviews but middling sales. "We received a lot of high scores, and the satisfaction of our users is the best compliment we can get. However," concedes Matsuyama, "the sales numbers aren't quite there yet." But there is still hope for the "Little Tail Bronx" series, the company's internal name for the world that includes Tail Concerto, Solatorobo, and the Fukuoka public-service campaign. Namco Bandai had been actively pursuing Western publishers for Solatorobo, selecting XSEED for the North American release and Nintendo of Europe for the European launch. At this point, the series's future is hanging on its reception in the West.

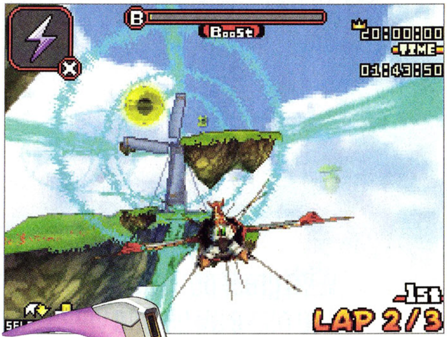
Even if it isn't the hit that he's hoping for, Matsuyama won't have any regrets about the years he spent getting Solatorobo made. He thinks of it this way: "We love to create new worlds, and will continue to aggressively pursue new concepts. We fight for original titles like Solatorobo because those are the games we want to make."

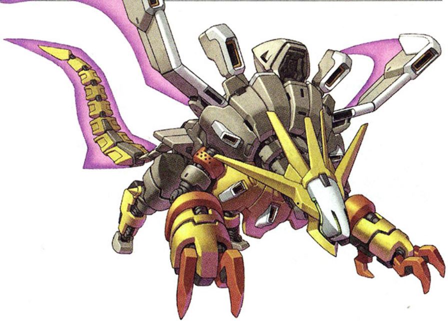


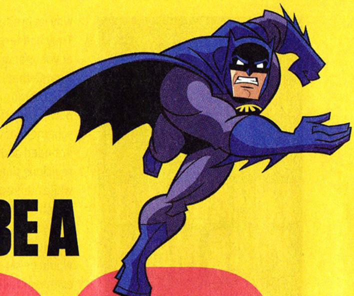
Open all ports! Prepare to fire! Blow away anyone who gets in our way!



[Below] At the Air Robo Grand Prix, you can race against your friends wirelessly. We know you'll never actually do it, but you *could*.







IT'S HARD TO BE A HERO

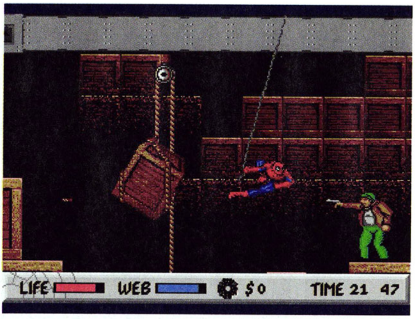
With great power comes great responsibility—the responsibility to make awesome video games. Do these heroes get it right?

BY PHIL THEOBALD

Superheroes are bigger than ever. You need look no further than this summer's movie scene—filled with the likes of Thor, Green Lantern, and Captain America—for proof. But while superheroes are known for their astonishing feats on the big screen and the comic-book page, their video game interpretations over the years have been a mixed bag. Some publishers take the easy way out and crank out sloppy games, hoping to coast by on the big name attached to it. On the other hand, some creators look into what makes each superhero special and use that knowledge to create a title that best represents him or her. With that in mind, we take a look at some of the most prominent superheroes out there, and see which of their games got it right and which ones headed down the darker path.

SPIDER-MAN

Whether you consider him amazing or spectacular, your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man has been a popular star of video games since the late '70s. With a great range of superpowers, a rogue's gallery of enemies, and a wisecracking attitude, Spidey is an ideal game hero.



Spider-Man vs. the Kingpin

GENESIS • SEGA • 1991

Referred to as simply Spider-Man on its cover art, this was one of the first truly great Spider-Man video games. The story involves Spider-Man attempting to clear his name after being framed by the Kingpin. This, of course, results in encounters with multiple supervillains, including Doctor Octopus, the Sandman, the Lizard, and Venom. The graphics authentically replicate the look of a comic book, and the large mazelike levels are fun to explore. There's even a gameplay mechanic that allows the player to take photographs of the supervillains to sell to the *Daily Bugle*. Why just be Spider-Man when you can be Peter Parker as well?

Spider-Man/Venom: Separation Anxiety

SUPER NES • ACCLAIM • 1995

Separation Anxiety's predecessor (Spider-Man/Venom: Maximum Carnage) was a mediocre beat-'em-up, but it gained a following due to the incredible popularity of the Venom character and the fact that it was based on an actual storyline from the comics (the delicious-looking red cartridge didn't hurt, either). This sequel, however, was a definite let down. Despite having a two-player mode (Maximum Carnage was single-player-only), the graphics are significantly worse and the cool comic-book cut-scenes have been replaced with bland screens filled with text. Without the extras to distract us, the dull gameplay is more evident.

Spider-Man

NINTENDO 64 • ACTIVISION • 2000

Two years before Sam Raimi's film would bring Spider-Man to the forefront of pop culture, Activision released this N64 title starring ol' web-head. At the time, it was often declared to be the best Spider-Man game yet, and it's still pretty darn good today. The graphics suffer from an overuse of the fog effect, but that's countered by a great fighting system that makes good use of Spidey's powers. The game also feels very comic-bookish thanks to plenty of voiceover work (including Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee as the narrator), lots of alternate costumes, and unlockable comic-book covers that provide a look back at Spider-Man's long history.

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions

Wii • ACTIVISION • 2010

The coolest thing about Shattered Dimensions is that it acknowledges the multiple continuities that exist within the Spider-Man universe. Alternate realities are fairly common in comic books, but most video game adaptations stick to covering one at a time. Thanks to a universe-bending MacGuffin, the player gets to take control of four different versions of Spider-Man throughout this adventure: The Amazing Spider-Man, Ultimate Spider-Man, Spider-Man 2099, and Spider-Man Noir. Each version features different gameplay and fighting techniques, making this a highly varied experience.

SPIDER-MAN'S SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Make games that don't rely on any specific movie tie-in.

....

Take advantage of each hero's long history.

DON'T

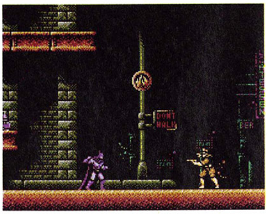
Take away features when making a sequel.

....

Create beat-'em-up games with no multiplayer support.

BATMAN

He is the terror that flaps in the night—no, wait; that's Darkwing Duck. We're talking about the Dark Knight, the Caped Crusader, the World's Greatest Detective. He's Batman, and he has nearly 75 years' worth of comics—plus several movies, animated series, and video games—to his name. Sure, some of those games may reek of guano, but the bat has a few winners under his utility belt.



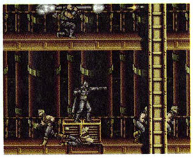
Batman

NES • SUNSOFT • 1989

This action/platform game is just as dark and moody as the Tim Burton movie on which it's based. The game doesn't mimic the plot and locations of the movie exactly (some levels have Batman fighting through what appear to be alien space stations), but the detailed graphics and fantastic soundtrack keep the spirit of Gotham City alive regardless. In addition to his fists, Batman has a few weapons at his disposal, including a spear gun, spinning disks, and—of course—Batarangs. Perhaps his coolest move, however, is his wall jump, which reminds us that Batman was a highly trained ninja long before Batman Begins.

Batman

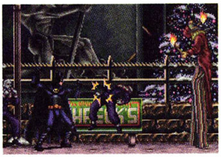
GENESIS • SUNSOFT • 1990



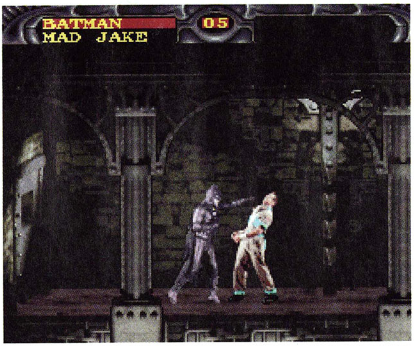
Sunsoft really understood Batman back in the day. Although a completely different game from the NES title, this interpretation of Tim Burton's 1989 movie features excellent graphics and rocking music by composer Naoki Kodaka. This 16-bit version follows the plot of the movie more closely, featuring such familiar locales as the Axis Chemical Plant and the museum that was ransacked by the Joker. Additionally, players are allowed to take control of both the Batmobile and the Batwing in a pair of vehicle stages.

Batman Returns

SUPER NES • KONAMI • 1993



Final Fight-style brawlers were very popular during the late '80s and early '90s, and it seemed like just about every hero got to appear in one. This one, which is based on the second Tim Burton Batman movie, is extremely good. Mood is very important in the Batman universe, and Konami took full advantage of the graphic and music capabilities of the Super NES to replicate the slightly whimsical/slightly creepy tone of the film. The characters are also rather large, and Batman's punches look and sound like they pack a wallop. It's especially satisfying to grab thugs and bash their skulls together. The fighting is so great that the 3D driving stage almost feels unnecessary.



Batman Forever

SUPER NES • ACCLAIM • 1995

Batman had a nice string of top-notch video games, but it seemed like the quality took a dip right when his movies did. Acclaim's Batman Forever is based on (shudder) Joel Schumacher's first attempt at a Batman movie, and boy, is it awful. The digitized graphics look significantly uglier than the hand-drawn look of the Batman Returns game. The interface is also needlessly complex. Even worse, though, is that fact that Acclaim decided to give this beat-'em-up a control scheme (and array of fighting moves) seemingly straight out of Mortal Kombat. Not surprisingly, what works in a fighting game definitely doesn't work in an action game.

BATMAN'S SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Replicate the mood of a superhero's stomping grounds.

....

Make use of a hero's modes of transportation.

....

Let us feel the superhero's attacks.

....

Use humor when appropriate—these are *comic* books, after all.

DON'T

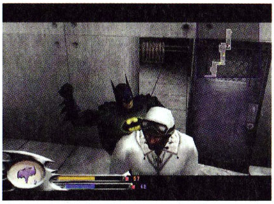
Get *too* experimental with control schemes.

....

Make the camera the most powerful enemy.

....

Forget defensive moves.



Batman: Dark Tomorrow

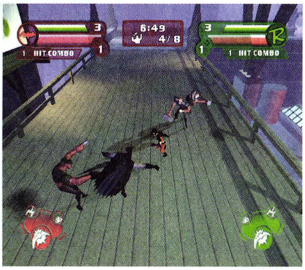
GAMECUBE • KEMCO • 2003

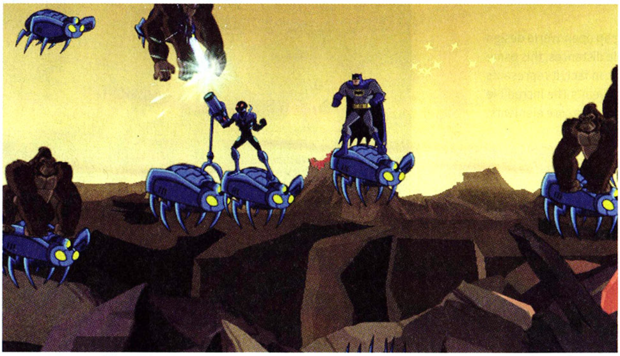
Batman: Dark Tomorrow was a pretty ambitious game that went almost entirely wrong. Batman is a skilled fighter, but you wouldn't know it from this game. The awkward combo system is no fun to use and the lack of a block ability takes a good chunk of skill out of battles. Of course, the poor fighting engine is just one of the problems. Players also have to contend with poor controls, confusing level design, bad camera angles, and the pace-ruining need to enter a first-person view to throw a Batarang. Early hype for the game emphasized taking advantage of Batman's famous detective skills, but that amounts to merely watching him figure things out during the (admittedly pretty interesting) cut-scenes. Still, the story isn't good enough to make you slog through the game.

Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu

GAMECUBE • UBISOFT • 2003

Plenty of fans will argue that Batman: The Animated Series provides the best interpretation of the Batman character to date. It was this version of Batman that starred in a couple of fantastic titles for the Super NES and Genesis. However, once the 16-bit era passed, the "animated" Batman games began to suffer. Rise of Sin Tzu is a good example. Despite the game as a whole having plenty going for it—four playable characters, the talented voice actors from the series, and a new villain designed by comics legend Jim Lee—the combat is terribly dull. Simple button-mashing combos, minimal enemy AI, and repetitive goals can ruin even the most promising game.



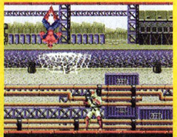


Batman: The Brave and the Bold—The Videogame

Wii, NINTENDO DS • WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE • 2010

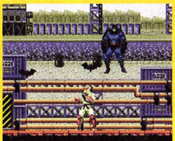
After years, Batman finally returns in a 2D brawler—in style. As an adaptation of the intentionally campy *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* animated series, this game is chock-full of humor and outstanding animation. The fighting may be somewhat simplistic, but the varied levels and ample voiceover work hold your interest as you play. Bringing a second player along for the ride also helps. The Nintendo DS version of the game is entirely different, but it too is extremely well-made. The DS title can even link up with the Wii console game, allowing a player to use the portable system to control the impish Bat-Mite.

CURIOUS CAMEOS



Unfriendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

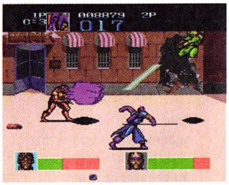
There are so many superheroes out there that sometimes the costumed do-gooders can't be confined to their own titles. In Sega's Genesis classic The Revenge of Shinobi gamers were surprised to see a couple of familiar faces. After leading Joe Musashi, the ninja star of the game, through Chinatown and across the top of a speeding train, you face off against that stage's boss—Spider-Man?! After taking enough damage, the wall-crawler morphs into—Batman?! Of course, these aren't the real Spider-Man and Batman (the faux Batman flew around on bat wings, for instance); they're just two of several pop-culture parodies within the game. Spidey's appearance became official when Sega obtained the rights to publish Spider-Man games, but later revisions of The Revenge of Shinobi altered the fake Batman to look more like a monster and less like DC's superhero. The most recent version of the game (available on Virtual Console) modifies these parodies even further.



It's the right mood for a... bat fight.

THE AVENGERS

Marvel's Avengers have had many different members over the years, so it's not surprising to see the group and some of its more famous heroes featured in video games. We've assembled a sampling of some of the most well-known entries in the franchise.



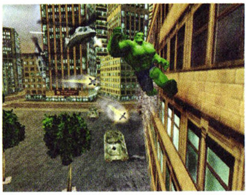
Captain America and the Avengers

ARCADE • DATA EAST • 1991

Captain America may get top billing, but this beat-'em-up also features Iron Man, Hawkeye, and the Vision as playable characters. Like many superhero games of the time, it played much like the classic Double Dragon. With plenty of familiar villains to fight, this game did a great job of placing you into the Avengers' world. Although a 1992 Genesis port did a fine job of recreating the arcade experience (it even featured many of the digitized voice clips), the Super NES version (released by Mindscape in 1993) was hampered by poor control and cheap enemy attacks.

The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction

GAMECUBE • SIERRA ENTERTAINMENT • 2005



We all know that Hulk smashes, but Ultimate Destruction was the first game to really make us feel like the big brute as he plowed through enemies. Featuring an open-world design and the ability to scale walls and leap incredible distances, this game comes across as very true to the Hulk's character. In fact, it represents the Hulk so well that Sega's 2008 title based on that year's The Incredible Hulk film borrowed plenty of its core elements.

THE AVENGERS' SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Cast the game with recognizable voice actors.

....

Use music to effectively set a superheroic mood.

....

Make sure superstrong hits feel suitably powerful.

DON'T

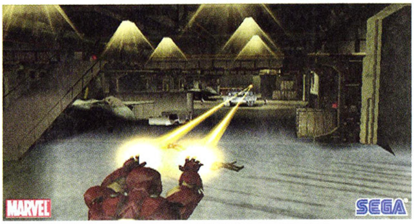
Artificially make the bad guys stronger than they should be.

....

Make a hero complete repetitive tasks.

....

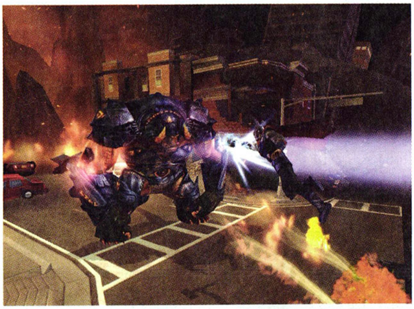
Let bad motion controls get in the way of the action.



Iron Man

Wii • SEGA • 2008

Movie audiences fell in love with Robert Downey Jr.'s portrayal of Tony Stark (Iron Man's not-so-secret identity), and it's a treat hearing the actor reprise his role in this video game adaptation of the first Iron Man film. The game also makes good use of Black Sabbath's song "Iron Man." These fun little touches aren't enough to redeem the game as a whole, though; it's filled with boring mission objectives and bland enemies. Who would have thought we'd get tired of flying around in an armored suit and blasting bad guys with repulsor rays?



Thor: God of Thunder

Wii • SEGA • 2011

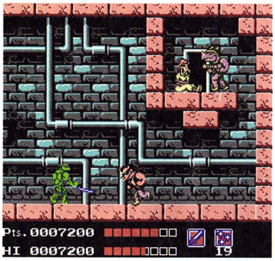
Can the power of an ancient god really be contained within a mere video game? Not if the recent Thor: God of Thunder is to be believed. Smacking foes with Mjölnir (Thor's kinda-hard-to-pronounce hammer) should be the highlight of the game, but it comes down to simply tapping the A Button over and over. The Wii Remote controller can be swung for more powerful hits, but some dodgy motion controls mean your gestures don't always translate onscreen as they should. Sadly, this game feels like one of Loki's tricks.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

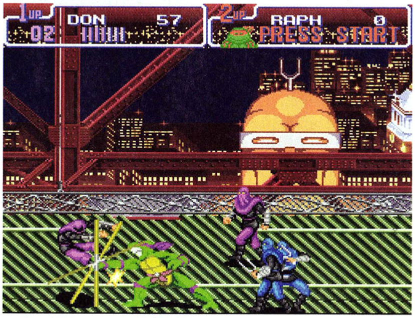
It doesn't matter if they're dark and gritty like the comics or light and goofy like the original cartoon—the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are all kinds of awesome. Given their emphasis on fast-paced ninja fighting and wild villains, the heroes in a half shell are naturally suited to video games.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

NES • ULTRA GAMES • 1989



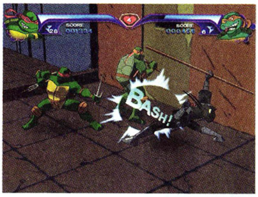
The Ninja Turtles pretty much owned the late '80s, and fans of all ages were anxiously awaiting the chance to experience Turtle Power in video game form. When Konami (under its Ultra Games label) released this—the first TMNT game ever—on the NES, we were all so excited that we graciously overlooked its many faults. Looking back on it now, though, we can see this game was a stinker filled with floaty controls, bad level design, cheap deaths, and bizarre enemies that had no place in the Ninja Turtles universe. Don't even get us started on that stage where you have to swim through electrified seaweed and disarm bombs. Ugh!



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles in Time

SUPER NES • KONAMI • 1992

In contrast to how disappointing the first NES TMNT game was, the Turtles' first appearance on the Super NES exceeded everyone's expectations. Based on the second TMNT arcade game, the home version of Turtles in Time is actually better than its quarter-sucking big brother. Despite supporting only two players at once (as opposed to the arcade's four), the Super NES port features new levels and a better selection of boss battles. Sure, it may be another brawler, but it has excellent graphics, cool moves, and tons of personality.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

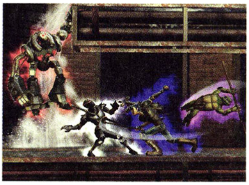
GAMECUBE • KONAMI • 2003

When this game—based on the 2003 animated series—was released, it had been 10 years since the last Turtles video game. Not only were fans of the then-new cartoon itching to take control of the four reptilian heroes, but those who had grown up during the first wave of Turtlemania were anxious to relive their childhood with a suitable retro revival. Although the game was clearly inspired by the arcade original, it doesn't live up to its predecessor. A lackluster move set and poor pacing lead to monotonous combat, and the repetitive voice samples make us start rooting for Shredder.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up

Wii • UBISOFT • 2009

Taking clear inspiration from Super Smash Bros., Smash-Up allows up to four players to brawl with more than a dozen different characters from the TMNT universe (and a couple of Ubisoft's raving Rabbids). Since the gameplay is virtually identical to that of Nintendo's fan favorite, it plays pretty well. However, this does lead to the game feeling very derivative. With few characters to choose from and a lack of memorable moments, this game is best left to diehard Turtles fanatics.



THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES' SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Remain true to the heroes' world.

....

Provide a deep battle system.

DON'T

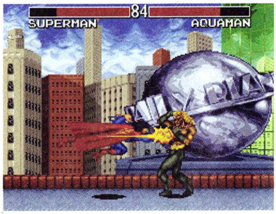
Make the heroes too chatty.

....

Simply copy another game's success.

JUSTICE LEAGUE

Like Marvel's Avengers, DC's Justice League has featured a rotating roster since its inception. There have been video games based on both the team as a whole and on some of its individual members. Unfortunately, the Justice League's games probably wouldn't win these heroes any super friends.



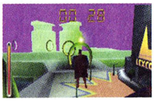
Justice League Task Force

SUPER NES • ACCLAIM • 1995

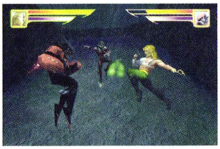
With titles like Street Fighter II and Mortal Kombat tearing up arcades and home systems in the early-to-mid '90s, everybody wanted to get a piece of the fighting-game pie. Enter Justice League Task Force, a fighting game that lets you battle as one of eight popular DC characters (and Aquaman). To get around the "why are these good guys beating each other up" conundrum, the plot involves Darkseid attacking the earth with robotic clones of our heroes. Choppy animation and unbalanced characters make this title good for little more than answering the age-old question: "Can Batman defeat Superman?"

Superman

NINTENDO 64 • TITUS SOFTWARE • 1999



Here we go. This is it. This is the game that's commonly referred to as "Superman 64" even though the numbers don't actually appear in its title. It's widely considered to be one of the worst games of all time, and with good reason—it's really, really bad. The first thing you'll notice about the game are the hideous graphics, but you'll soon become overwhelmed by the horrible control that seems to randomly cycle between sending the Man of Steel veering off in unpredictable directions and getting him stuck on parts of the environment. Nevermind the fact that one of the greatest superheroes of all time spends more time flying through rings than duking it out with villains. Truly, this is gaming kryptonite.



Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis

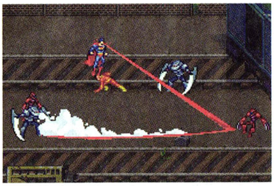
GAMECUBE • TDK MEDIACTIVE • 2003

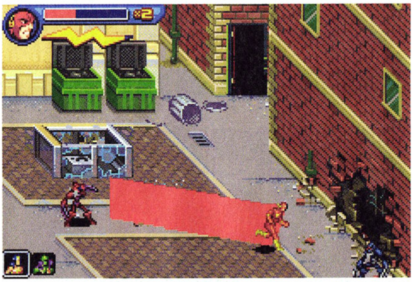
Poor Aquaman. Everyone is always making fun of him (heck, we've already cracked one joke at the guy's expense). Fishy superpowers aside, though, you can't expect to get much respect when you star in video games of this caliber. The waterlogged scene is set via a series of comic book–style panels that explain the game's plot. It's a pity that these scenes use the blurry, ugly character models instead of actual drawings. The game itself is no better—the mostly empty environments are foggy and Aquaman's miniscule move set means that the fighting becomes dull after you've pummeled only a handful of enemies.

Justice League Heroes: The Flash

GAME BOY ADVANCE • WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE • 2006

The Flash may be one of the most well-known members of the Justice League, but he hasn't starred in many video games. The GBA title makes a decent attempt at bringing the Scarlett Speedster home. It is, like many games we've already looked at, a good old-fashioned beat-'em-up. It seems like it would be tough to translate Flash's powers into a brawler, but developer WayForward does an admirable job. One move allows Flash to quickly dash over to the nearest enemy and deliver a quick punch. He can also enter a state that replicates superspeed by slowing down the enemy. Cameos by other members of the Justice League add some spice, but there's no escaping the fact that the combat becomes repetitive after a few levels.





THE JUSTICE LEAGUE'S SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Feature as many characters from the comic universe as possible.

....

Allow the player to take control of a hero's superpowers.

DON'T

Put us to sleep with boring, poorly rendered cut scenes.

....

Make a game as bad as Superman for N64—ever.

HELLO
my name is
Chris

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

This is **Chris**, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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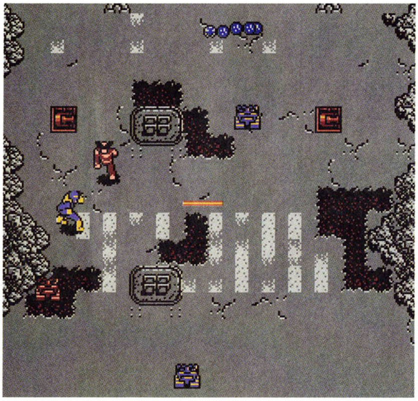
X-MEN

Like the Ninja Turtles, the members of the X-Men are mutants. Instead of just growing into large, humanoid animals, though, the X-Men get cool superpowers such as eye lasers and mind control. Now *those* are mutations we can respect.



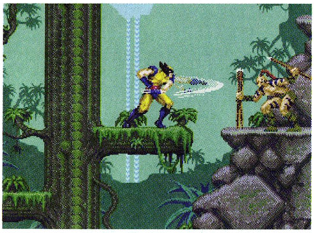
The Uncanny X-Men

NES • LJN • 1989

The X-Men video game series did not get off to a good start with this 8-bit title. Although there are six characters to choose from, they all play the same. Each attacks with either a long-range laser blast or a laughably short-ranged punch, neither of which truly displays the characters' trademark powers. Combine the generic gameplay with horrible control, atrocious partner AI, and some of the worst graphics seen on the NES, and it's no wonder X-Men fans were unimpressed.

X-Men

GENESIS • SEGA • 1993

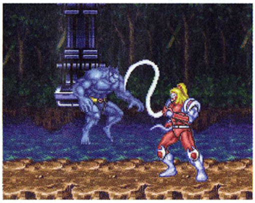


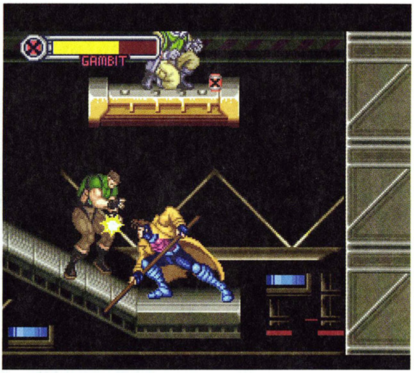
Apparently, the X-Men had to wait until the 16-bit era before video games could fully exploit their potential. Sega's X-Men game for the Genesis not only looks fantastic but plays just as well. Players can control Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, or Nightcrawler, and each of the heroes is equipped with his mutant abilities. Of course, there are plenty of X-Men, so other popular characters, such as Jean Grey, Storm, and Iceman, appear as support characters. Amid the excellent gameplay, there is one notoriously tricky part: in order to reset an in-game computer near the end of the adventure, the player needs to actually tap the Reset button on the Genesis system. This puzzle stumped lots of people back in the day.

X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse

SUPER NES • CAPCOM • 1994

Genesis owners weren't the only ones to get a great 16-bit X-Men title. Thanks to Capcom, Super NES players could also take control of the mutant heroes. Like in Sega's game, each playable character has unique skills, allowing for some variety in the gameplay. There are also plenty of villains from the comic-book series. The action and level design make Mutant Apocalypse feel a bit like a Mega Man game mixed with a 2D fighting game.





THE X-MEN'S SUPERHERO DOS AND DON'TS

DO

Let players take control of a wide variety of superpowers.

....

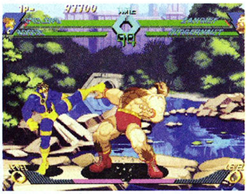
Break out and explore genres beyond the norm.

DON'T

Give characters with wildly different abilities identical moves.

....

Ship a game that's full of bugs and glitches.



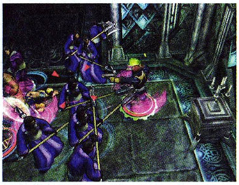
X-Men vs. Street Fighter

ARCADE • CAPCOM • 1996

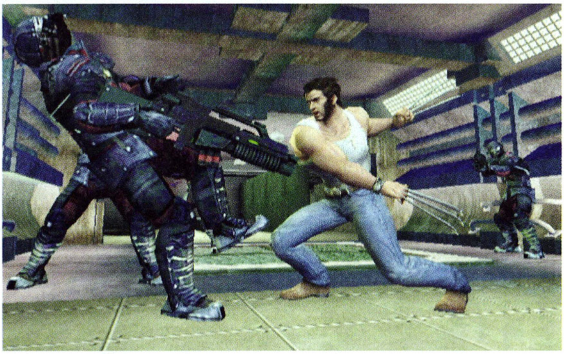
Crossovers are nothing new in the world of comic books, but Capcom was feeling exceptionally inspired when it decided to carry this trope over to the world of video games. The X-Men had already starred in an arcade fighting game called X-Men: Children of the Atom, but now Marvel's mutants (both good and evil) could face off against Ryu, Ken, and the other Street Fighters. The fighting system is fast and furious, and it allows for combos that are far more damaging than Street Fighter fans were used to. X-Men vs. Street Fighter's popularity established Capcom's Vs. style of fighting games that continues to this day.

X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse

GAMECUBE • ACTIVISION • 2005



If you look at all of the various superhero games that we've talked about so far, you've probably noticed that they tend to fall into two categories—side-scrolling brawlers and fighting games. The nature of superheroes makes them very easy to plug into these genres. Every now and then, however, a developer will branch out and try something new. That's what Raven Software did with the X-Men Legends series of dungeon-crawling action-RPGs. Considering that such games are usually populated with wizard and orcs, it might seem a bit odd to be playing as Colossus and Juggernaut instead, but it works. Leveling up your character and earning new powers as you fight is incredibly rewarding, and it adds greater depth to the standard pummelfest.



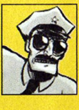
X-Men Origins: Wolverine

Wii • ACTIVISION • 2009

As arguably the most popular X-Men character, it's little wonder that Wolverine has starred in a few of his own video games. Unfortunately for such a beloved hero, his games occasionally turn out like this one. X-Men Origins is loosely based on Wolvie's solo film, and it's just about as disappointing as the movie. The graphics are ugly and the environments are bland and lifeless. An attempt is made to deepen the gameplay with an upgrade system, but the button-mashing combat renders it mostly unnecessary. These problems pale in comparison to the many glitches that can be found in the game, however: the frame rate takes the occasional nosedive and Wolverine sometimes becomes stuck in an object or falls through the ground.

MISSING HEROS

The titles that we've talked about here are just a small sample of the many, many superhero video games out there. Even so, there are still plenty of heroes that haven't gotten to star in their own game. Here are some that we feel deserve the honor.

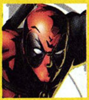


AXE COP

Sometimes you just want to chop the heads off of bad guys, and there's no hero more suited to the job than Axe Cop. Created by 29-year-old Ethan Nicolle and his 5-year-old brother Malachai, this hilarious web comic is ripe for a video game.

LOBO

We'd love to see an action game that incorporates the Main Man's chosen profession of bounty hunting. There was actually a Lobo game planned at one point; Nintendo Power even previewed it in issue 84.



DEADPOOL

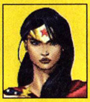
The Merc with a Mouth is, well, kinda nuts. He's also more antihero than hero, and he's extremely violent. Still, any game starring this guy would be a blast. His constant jokes and tendency to break the fourth wall would be the game's highlight.

THE MAXX

The Maxx isn't a typical superhero. In the real world he's a homeless man, but in the Outworld he is the powerful protector of the Jungle Queen. It would be interesting to see a game attempt to handle The Maxx's two worlds.

SQUIRREL GIRL

Marvel's Squirrel Girl has used her ability to communicate with squirrels to defeat Doctor Doom. 'Nuff said.



WONDER WOMAN

Diana here has been around for 70 years. She has her own fondly remembered TV series. She's one of the founding members of the Justice League. It's a crime that she hasn't been given her own video game by now.

THE SNAKE EATER STRIKES

Tactical espionage action sheds its skin and is reborn as **Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D** for Nintendo 3DS.

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** DEVELOPER: **KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2011** **N3DS**

Russia. 1964. The height of the Cold War. In this hostile environment, it's up to a single American soldier to infiltrate enemy territory, rescue a Soviet scientist who wants to defect to the United States, and escape without leaving a trace that he'd ever been there. Impossible? For most, yes. But not for Naked Snake. A new breed of soldier trained by World War II veteran The Boss, Snake is a master of camouflage, close-quarter combat (CQC), and stealth techniques—if anyone can get the job done, he can. But this is the world of Hideo Kojima's Metal Gear series, where surprises and twists await around every corner, and nothing is quite what it seems. Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D promises to take immersive military gameplay to an entirely new level.

FROM RUSSIA WITH STEALTH

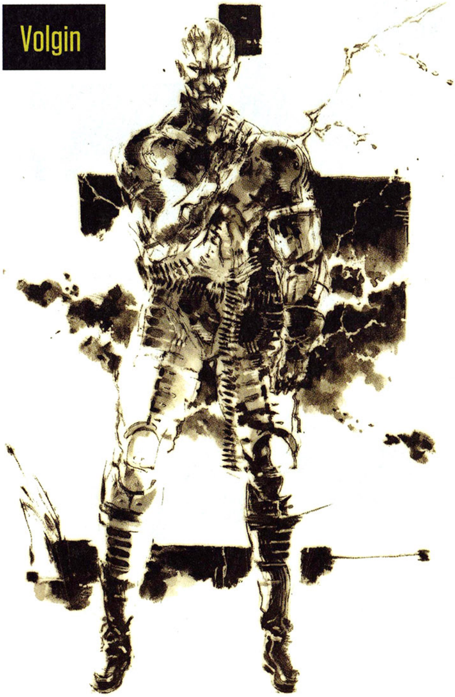
An enhanced version of the highly acclaimed (and M-rated) Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (released for PlayStation 2 in 2004), Snake Eater 3D pretty much has it all—action, tension, stealth, drama, and even a little romance. Metal Gear vets will get a chance to experience Snake's metamorphosis into the world's greatest soldier in a whole new way thanks to the stereoscopic 3D visuals provided by the Nintendo 3DS handheld, while newcomers will find that the game is a perfect jumping-on point, since it's the first game in the Metal Gear saga from a chronological storyline perspective. The game breaks from series tradition in other ways, too; unlike previous Metal Gear titles, Snake Eater 3D isn't set primarily in a world of metal-and-concrete bases, but takes place largely in organic environments—swamps, forests, caves, mountains, and more—where knowledge of the terrain will help you overcome the odds that are stacked against you.

When the mission begins—initiated by a HALO (high-altitude, low-opening) jump into the Tselinoyarsk region of the Soviet mountains—you're equipped with a few pieces of enemy-detection gear and armed with only a knife and a Hush Puppy Mk22 tranquilizer gun. Like his code name implies, Naked Snake brings only the essentials; any other weapons or equipment you'll have to procure on-site. The bad guys—highly skilled KGB operatives who patrol the forest paths—are considerably more well-armed. And it's not just the Russians you have to be wary of; there are natural hazards too, including vicious alligators, lethal quicksand, and treacherous ravines.

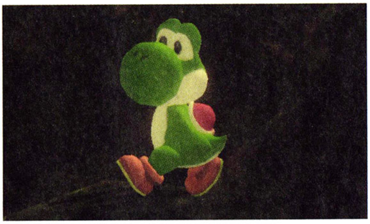
However, the environment can

Luckily for gamers everywhere, Naked Snake is just a code name. Because infiltrating Russia in just your birthday suit would be weird.

Volgin



Sensing weakness in Soviet leadership, the cold and ruthless Colonel Volgin plans to usurp control of the USSR. Odd markings scar Volgin's face, and he's able to manipulate electricity like some supervillain.



[Right] Yes, that's a Yoshi doll hiding in the jungle.

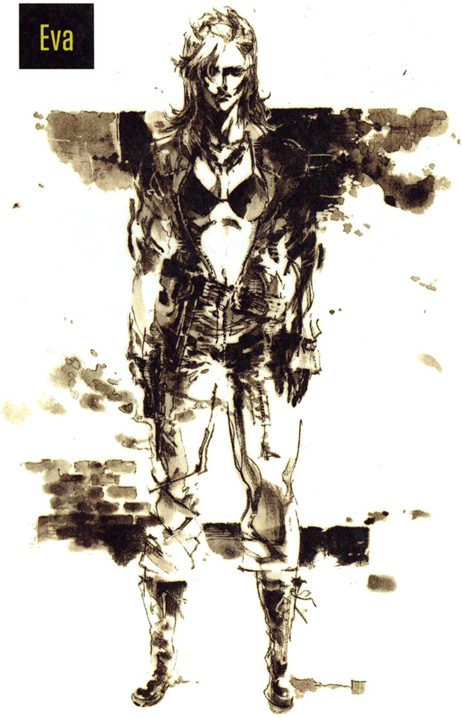
also be your friend. Though you're outnumbered and outgunned, you can turn the odds in your favor by playing it smart: conceal yourself in tall grass, hide in hollowed-out logs, hang from cliffs or tree branches if necessary, and even unleash nature's wrath—by, for example, knocking a beehive onto an unsuspecting foe. A numerical Camouflage Index lets you know how well hidden you are, and you can apply different types of camo to your face and body as the situation warrants. Leaf or tree-bark camouflage is probably best when you're belly-crawling through the forest, but when you reach an old brick building, you'll want to switch to red-and-black urban camo. You can even make custom camo patterns by taking photos with the Nintendo 3DS camera. If you *do* get spotted by the enemy, you can take them out with a variety of lethal and nonlethal CQC attacks (including knocking out an enemy with a powerful slam and using a foe as a human shield), but you're on a sneaking mission—the point is to not get spotted in the first place.

Once you make your way past the enemy troops and sneak into the ruins of an abandoned factory where the Soviet scientist—his name is Sokolov—is being held, the stuff really hits the fan. Sokolov is working on an all-terrain nuclear-equipped tank called the Shagohad (it's the predecessor to the bipedal Metal Gear mech in the original Metal Gear game), and the Americans aren't the only ones who want him; a Russian extremist faction, led by Colonel Volgin, also has plans for the scientist. Helping Sokolov escape is fairly easy, but as Snake and Sokolov are heading to their extraction point, Snake's mentor, The Boss, halts their progress. In a not-so-shocking turn of events (it was indicated in the game's first screenshots, which were released more than a year ago), The Boss betrays Snake, hands Sokolov over to Colonel Volgin, and leaves Snake severely injured. To make matters worse, The Boss and Volgin detonate a nuclear warhead and blame it on the United States, putting the world on the brink of all-out war.

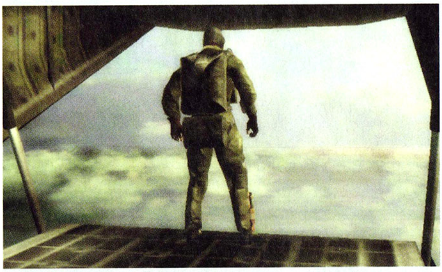
EAT OR BE EATEN

Down but not out, it falls to Snake to clean up the international mess that his mentor has left behind—and that means going after The Boss and eliminating her to clear America's name. The pursuit will take you through numerous locales—from marshlands to subterranean lakes to heavily fortified enemy out-posts—and you'll have the chance to stockpile an assortment of weapons, including pistols, a shotgun, assault rifles, sniper rifles, a submachine gun, a rocket launcher, mines, and multiple types of grenades. You'll also acquire useful gear, such as night-vision goggles (great for seeing

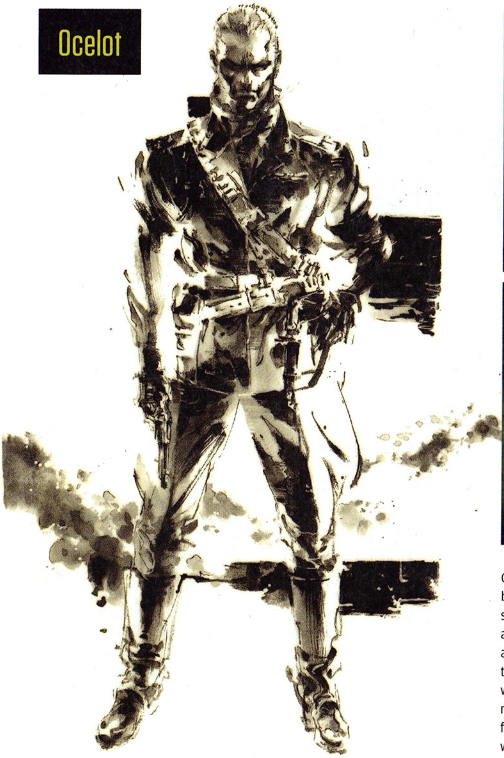
Eva



Eva is Snake's contact behind enemy lines. Whose side is she really on? It's hard to tell. But we do know that she's an expert motorcycle rider and that her interest in Snake seems more than professional.



Ocelot



If you played Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes on GameCube, you've met this character's older incarnation: Revolver Ocelot. This gunslinger serves under Colonel Volgin, but he's driven by his own ambitions.

in caves), a mine detector, cardboard boxes (Snake's favorite!), and other equipment that will help you outsmart your adversaries.

What makes Snake Eater different from a typical military game, though, is that it's not just about having the coolest tools or the biggest guns. It's about survival. Snake has a stamina gauge that depletes as the game progresses, which in turn affects aspects such as his aim and his rate of damage recovery. If his stamina gets too low, it might even cause Snake's stomach to rumble, alerting enemies to his presence. The solution? Finding food, of course. There are lots of creatures roaming Russia—pythons, birds, rats, tree frogs, crabs, etc.—and Snake can turn most of them into a tasty treat. (There's a reason the game is called Snake Eater!)

Furthermore, when you get injured, recuperation requires more than just grabbing a health pickup. You'll have to use first aid to heal your wounds, or else your life bar will stay permanently depleted. To that end, you'll have to find and use splints (for broken bones); ointment (for burns); styptic (to stop bleeding); and bandages, sutures, and disinfectant (for a variety of wounds). If you stay out in the rain too long, you might even need cold medicine to prevent yourself from sneezing.

TASTES LIKE SNAKE

Colds are the least of your worries, however. When The Boss joined Colonel Volgin's team, she brought with her an elite group of supersoldiers, collectively known as the Cobra Unit. With skills so advanced that they border on the supernatural, these grizzled warriors are among the most memorable adversaries you'll ever face. The crew includes The Pain, who commands swarms of hornets; The Fury, a cosmonaut who wants to burn everything in sight; and The End, an ancient sniper who lives only for the thrill of battle. Luckily, Snake won't have to face these threats completely on his own. When the situation gets hairy, he can always radio a support team for advice on battle tactics, weapon use, and how to proceed on his mission.

As you can tell, virtually no detail has been overlooked in Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D. It promises to offer deep, multifaceted gameplay, a compelling story, and some of the best visuals on Nintendo 3DS. Best of all, the game should be considerably more impressive than its console precursor thanks to the inclusion of brand-new features such as a touch-screen inventory. Even if snake isn't ordinarily on your menu, this is one feast that N3DS owners won't want to miss.

SNAKE CHARMER

Metal Gear creator Hideo Kojima is the name most closely associated with the Metal Gear series, but he doesn't make the games by himself. Yoshikazu Matsuhana has been part of Kojima's team since 1991, and he's stepped up to fill the role of producer on Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D. We recently spoke to Matsuhana to gain even more insight into this highly anticipated title.

NINTENDO POWER It's been a while since we've seen Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D. How has the game evolved since it was last shown, and how far along is development?

YOSHIKAZU MATSUHANA
I would actually like [gamers] to experience and see the results with their own eyes. The players will be able to experience stealth gameplay within an environment that comes to life with 3D, and also new, special elements that can only be realized on the Nintendo 3DS.

Why did Konami choose this particular Metal Gear title to come to Nintendo 3DS (instead of, say, MGS2 or Peace Walker)?
The reasoning for the choice was because we wanted to take full advantage of the unique characteristics of the N3DS. The system excels at creating the illusion of depth and allows users to see stereoscopic 3D without glasses. With the majority of the game taking place in dense jungles, Snake Eater seemed like the best fit to take advantage of these features. In the jungle, there are trees, stones, and occasional waterfalls that extend off into the distance, making it a good fit for 3D. With the capabilities of N3DS, we are able to show off the depth and breadth of these beautiful natural environments like never before.

Despite being announced a year ago, very little of the game has been shown. Why has the game been mostly kept under wraps?
MGS3, the base for this game, features an unpredictable natural environment filled with flora and many detailed jungle elements. In order to bring these elements to life in 3D, we had to push the performance of the hardware to its limits. We were adamant about achieving the best graphic quality possible, and bringing the game to a level of detail that we were satisfied with took a bit more time than originally estimated.

We're big fans of the original MGS3: Snake Eater. Will this provide the same experience, or is there new content in this game (additional scenarios, environments, items, etc.)?
The story remains faithful to that of the original; however, the player controls and some other well-received elements from MGS4 and Peace Walker have been implemented into the game. Out of the MGS series, MGS3 received particularly high reviews and the N3DS version is being modified to take advantage of the unique characteristics of the hardware. I hope everyone will look forward to this evolved version of the game.

Much of the content shown in the trailers was different from the original MGS3. Will those new situations, such as the soldier fumbling with the cigarettes, be in the final game?
In the "Naked Sample," there were multiple experimental visuals that were created to demonstrate the kinds of effects that could be gained from making the game 3D. Those exact scenes won't necessarily be in the game; however, the 3D element is effectively utilized within the game.

For new players, what specific scenes or encounters throughout the game would you say are among the highlights?
This title is the prologue for Snake's journey through the titles that follow and it illustrates the origin for the series with the historical background of the era in which Metal Gear makes its appearance. Additionally, the characters of both friends and foes in the game are intriguing and memorable. I believe that the player's encounter with The Boss and learning about the truth behind her story will be a deeply moving experience.

Why does having the game in stereoscopic 3D improve MGS3? Can you give some examples of specific scenes or parts of the game that you feel have been especially improved by the 3D?
The jungle setting makes up the majority of the environments in MGS3. In that kind of setting, the many overlapping trees and infinitely layered branches create a sort of fractal world for the players to lose themselves in. When the novel visuals are combined with gameplay surprises, it creates a unique sensation for the player when a camouflaged enemy suddenly appears right before their eyes, emerging from the fractal chaos.

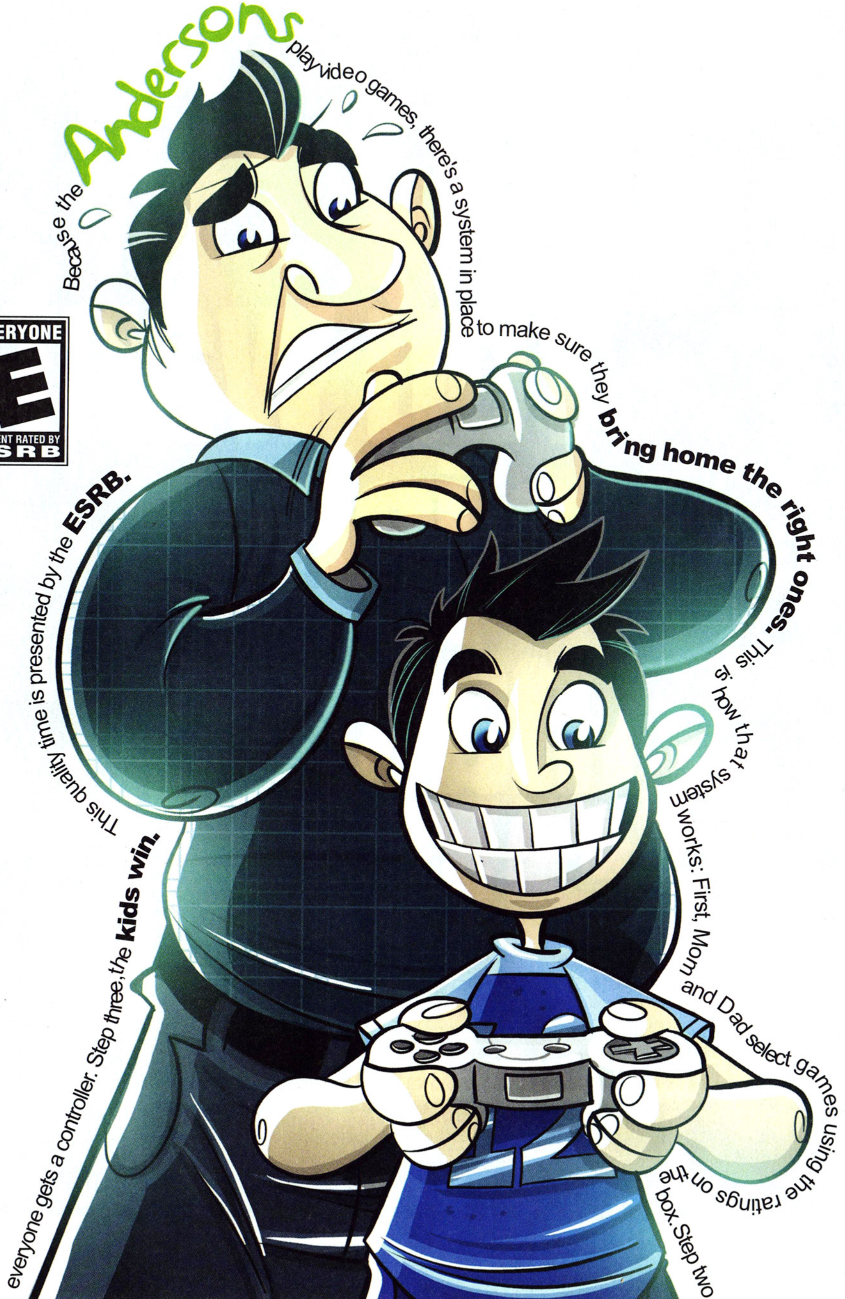
How will the touch screen be used? Will there be controls that take advantage of the system's gyroscope or microphone?
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D will utilize [both] screens. The bottom screen will allow the user to directly touch the screen to select an item or equip their weapon of choice. The options that the player might want to execute will be possible through intuitive touch controls using the bottom screen, making it an easy layout for first-time players.

Snake will climb trees and walk across branches and bridges in the game, and the gyroscopic sensor will be used to measure the player's tilting of the device within the game. In other words, if the player were to tilt the N3DS to one side, that would be reflected in the game and Snake would be thrown off balance. This gameplay element allows the player to literally become one with Snake through the N3DS interface.

Will the camera be more like that of the original Snake Eater or will it be more like Subsistence?
The camera from Subsistence has been adopted, as well as elements of the free-roaming camera system that was implemented in MGS4 and Peace Walker.

If you're a player who passed on the PlayStation 2 version of MGS3, why should you give this version a shot?
Playing an infiltration mission within a 3D world offers a new gameplay experience that was not possible on the PS2 version. Furthermore, I hope that the new gameplay elements utilizing the gyroscopic sensor and camera will give fans a taste of how the Metal Gear world can continue to evolve in exciting new ways in the future.

This is the first Metal Gear game to hit a Nintendo system in a while. Do you think that this might mean we'll be seeing more Metal Gear or Kojima Productions titles coming to Nintendo 3DS, or possibly Nintendo's next home console?
If the players express a strong demand for it, I believe that we can look into that possibility.



Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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SPECIAL REPORT

So, You want a job making Games?

Enough with the letters!

If you really want to know how to break into the video game business, we'll tell you.

BY VINCE MATTHEWS

If you're a serious video game player, you've probably thought about how cool it would be to turn your hobby into a career. Maybe you've even come up with some clever concepts for a game. But to succeed in the video game-making business, you'll need the skills and drive to turn those dreams into reality. If you're ready to put in the work required to reap the rewards, this guide will get you going in the right direction.

Although it can be tough to break into the video game industry, there are more gaming-related jobs to go around than ever before, and more paths available to help you reach them. But before you set your sights on becoming the next Shigeru Miyamoto, understand that game development is much more than sitting at a desk all day, scribbling stage maps and pictures of boss monsters. To get a taste of what a developer really does, take a look at our first step.

START SIMPLE

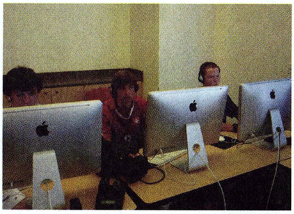
Thanks to the prevalence of player-customization features in today's titles, you can quickly build a game—or parts of one, anyway—without the knowledge or equipment needed for professional work. Creating a custom stage in Super Smash Bros. Brawl, for example, shares many elements with full-fledged game design: you brainstorm ideas, implement them, and test your level to discover what does and doesn't work. The Nintendo DS handheld offers a variety of titles that let you try your hand at level design, such as TrackMania DS, Bangai-O Spirits, and recent installments in the Mario vs. Donkey Kong series. But best of all is WarioWare D.I.Y., in which you can create your own entirely unique microgame from beginning to end. It's as close as you can get to developing an actual game without any real coding involved, and it's an essential test of any aspiring game maker's mettle.

Titles such as these let you work your brain just like a pro does, so if you find that you lack inspiration, can't push past design problems, or don't feel particularly motivated, then pursuing a career in game development probably isn't for you. On the other hand, if you find the process and problem-solving to be right up your alley, you might be ready to dip your toe into pro-level game development.

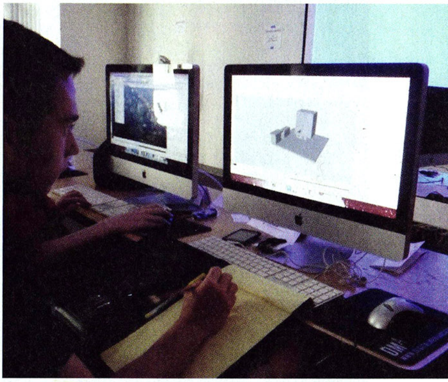
SUMMER CAMP

No, we're not talking about paddling a canoe or making leather bracelets. Today, young people interested in the video game industry can spend part of their summer at specialized computer or video game summer camps that offer the skills and direction needed to put you on track toward a career. These camps cater to many different skill levels and interests, from programming to level design to character creation.

One such camp has been helping kids break into the games business since 2002. Started by a group of Stanford computer educators, Digital Media Academy (DMA) offers programs in 2D and 3D game creation, character/level design (including Maya and Photoshop techniques), programming, graphic design, and more. At DMA, industry professionals—many of whom currently work in the gaming industry—teach the programs, so campers learn directly from people who possess valuable experience. DMA's camp programs are one- and two-week-long sessions and take place on the campuses of universities such as Harvard, Stanford, and UCLA (for a full list of locations,



If you think that you might enjoy pursuing a career as a game developer, summer camps (such as the ones run by Digital Media Academy, shown here) offer a great way to find out if the profession is a good fit for you.

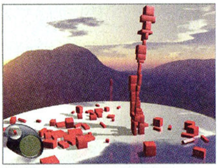
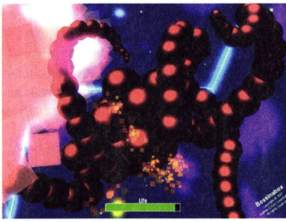
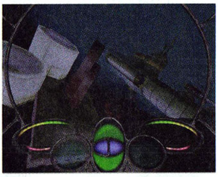


visit www.digitalmediaacademy.org), and include recreational activities to round out the camp experience. Programs are offered for kids as young as six, but there are advanced courses for teens and adults, such as introduction to game programming and Python, and programming with C++. DMA courses taken by teens and adults can be applied toward college credits. And since each course is project-based, campers leave with a CD containing something they created, such as a 3D character model or a playable game that they can continue to develop or just show to their friends.

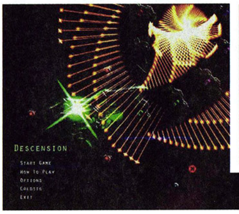
Computer camps like this one offer the chance to dive deeper into the areas of game development that interest you. Whether you attend a camp or not, the next step is only for those who are serious about chasing a career in game development.

VIDEO GAME SCHOOL

Ready to advance to the next level? Then put your nose back

Many professional video game developers got their start at DigiPen's campus in Redmond, Washington. Each of the games shown here were done by groups of students (to see many more—and try them, too—head over to www.digipen.edu/gallery/games/). With experts from Nintendo and Pixar on DigiPen's staff, it's no wonder that all of this work looks so impressive.



Which Job Fits You Best?

Many video gamer players who want to work in the industry are fixated on a single occupation, usually designer or producer. However, there are many jobs within the games business, and you'll find the greatest happiness if you pursue the one that is the best fit for your talents and goals.

PROGRAMMER

Behind every great game is a programmer, some dedicated techie turning endless amounts of computer code into thrilling graphics and riveting game play. This is the most technical aspect of the video game business. Accordingly, programmers must have strong math skills, as well as technical experience writing code for the platform they're working on. If math is not something you enjoy, you'll want to look at a different area of game development.

ARTIST

There are many roles for artists in game development, from creating conceptual illustrations to defining a specific look for characters or environments.

LEVEL OR CHARACTER DESIGNER

Once an artist has sketched out an idea for a character or a level, a designer needs to bring it to life using tools developed by programmers to build and manipulate objects within the game environment. (Programming skills are sometimes required for this job.)

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

A game's visual appearance, music, and sound effects are the responsibility of the creative director. In addition to setting the game's mood and style, a creative director works with the producer to refine how a game plays.

PRODUCER

The producer oversees game development and serves as the point person for a title, making regular reports to upper management. His primary role is to act as traffic cop, making sure everyone is getting what they need to do their jobs.

GAME TESTER

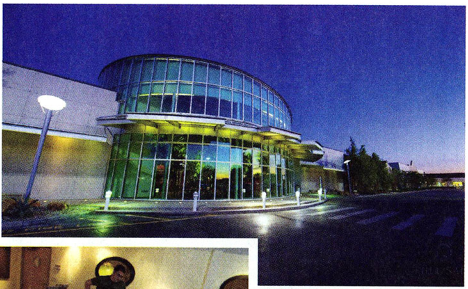
Sometimes referred to as QC/QA (Quality Control/Quality Assurance), a tester plays the same levels over and over to find bugs or glitches that programmers may have missed. It's an entry-level job that is custom-made for the insanely passionate gamer.

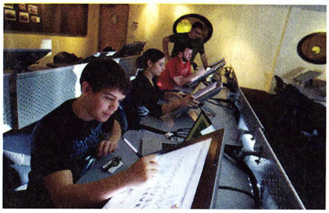
MARKETING MANAGER

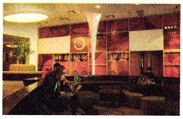
It's the marketing manager's responsibility to make sure a game gets the attention it deserves when it finally hits store shelves. The marketing manager places advertisements (online, in print, on TV, billboards, etc.) to promote their products. They also help develop compelling advertising materials and eye-grabbing packaging.

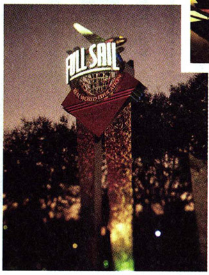
PUBLIC RELATIONS

A PR person gets the word out about a game and helps create a positive prelaunch buzz about it. They write press releases and develop plans to promote the game through traditional media outlets, social networks like Twitter and Facebook, and other means, such as getting new software into the hands of influential celebrities.









Full Sail University's campus, just outside Orlando, features state-of-the-art facilities where you can learn all about game development or film and music production. But you don't have to move to Florida; online courses are available, too.

to the grindstone and head to school—*video game* school.

One such place is the DigiPen Institute of Technology, which has been training game-industry professionals since 1988, when it set up shop as a computer-simulation and -animation school in Vancouver, BC, Canada. In 1996, DigiPen (www.digipen.edu) moved to Redmond, Washington so it could be closer to the video game industry, and it has recently expanded with a campus in Singapore. Enrollment numbers about 900 students total, and an impressive 12-to-1 student/faculty ratio ensures that students receive a lot of direct interaction with instructors. DigiPen offers bachelor-of-science degrees in real-time interactive simulation, computer engineering, and game design; a bachelor of arts degree in game design; a bachelor of fine arts degree in production animation; and a master of science degree in computer science. But scholarly degrees aside, DigiPen is primarily a place dedicated to video games and other forms of digital media, and the goal is to make class projects feel as close as possible to actual industry work. Students participate in year-long group projects that incorporate game engines, artificial intelligence, storyboarding, concept art, or prototype hardware. Game-design divas are encouraged to check their egos at the door and learn to work as a team. The faculty includes PhDs and industry professionals from Nintendo, Disney, Microsoft, and Pixar. Valve Software hired seven DigiPen students to turn their senior project into a fully realized video game, which was eventually published as Portal and took Game of the Year honors at the 2008 Game Developers Conference.

Do You Have What it Takes?

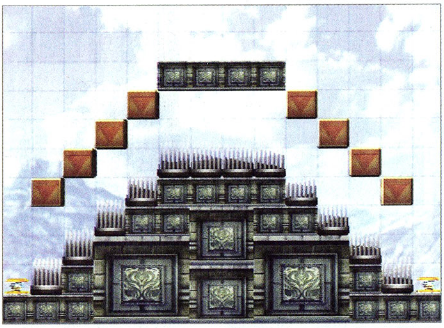
If you're contemplating a career in video games, it's time for some introspection: these are some personal characteristics you'll likely need to make it in the industry.

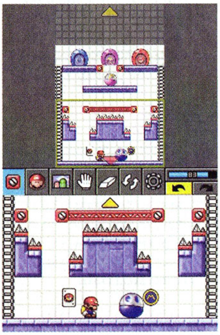
YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT VIDEO GAMES.
The best of the best love what they do, and this is especially true in the video game industry. In an environment filled with hard deadlines and long hours, if you don't have a passion for your work, you're going to run out of steam fast.

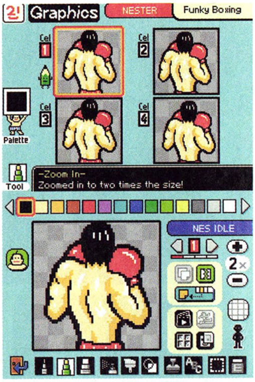
YOU ENJOY CONSTANTLY HONING YOUR SKILLS.
Don't expect to learn the ropes once and be set for the remainder of your career. Technology is constantly evolving, and you have to stay on your toes to keep up.

YOU SET GOALS AND ACCOMPLISH THEM.
Missing a deadline or a launch date could cost your company a ton of cash, so the more disciplined you become, the more it'll pay off in your career.

YOU'RE A PROBLEM-SOLVER.
How do you react when the pressure is on and nothing is going right? Can you keep your head amidst the chaos? Can you solve problems on your own? Coworkers may be pulling their hair out when deadlines come rolling around, so it's important that you maintain your composure.







-Zoom In-
Zoomed in to two times the size!

Games that include robust player-customization features such as level editors offer invaluable lessons for aspiring game designers. WarioWare D.I.Y. [right] even allows you to create full games.

Now *that's* breaking into the video game business.

Another school with a rich background in the digital arts is Florida's Full Sail University (www.fullsail.edu) near Orlando. It was founded in 1979 and offers various degree programs, including many with a film-production or music-production focus. Full Sail's video game programs include bachelor of arts degrees in computer animation, digital arts and design, game art, and game development; and a master of science degree in game design. The curriculum currently includes 35 degree programs, which are pursued by more than 13,000 students, many of them through Full Sail's online courses. Full Sail is long on success stories, too, with a roster of grads who are busy making noteworthy games. Computer animation-program graduate Chance Glasco has worked on three games from the Call of Duty series, while game development-program graduate Jameson Durall serves as a level designer for Electronic Arts and has worked on such high-profile titles as The Godfather, The Simpsons Game, and Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath.

GET TO WORK!

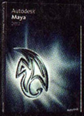
Of course, as with most fields, there is no single surefire way to secure a career in video games—a self-taught programming whiz with a great portfolio or good connections could have greater success than someone with a top-notch degree in game design. Miyamoto joined Nintendo as a staff artist and ended up making Mario. But the opportunities that we've outlined will get you the knowledge you need to become a game developer, and give you a leg up on those who aren't willing to work hard for what they want. Shooting for a career in video games may seem daunting, but those who prove their ability to consistently deliver quality work on time can often reap hefty rewards. And besides, who doesn't want to play games at work?

Tools of the Trade

The following development tools are industry-standard. Are they in your toolbox yet?

MAYA

USED BY: *ANIMATORS, DESIGNERS*



Autodesk Maya, an application that lets designers develop 3D elements, is used in video game architecture and development as well as for film and television production. (In 2008, the Maya Fluid Effects system won an Oscar for Technical Achievement.) A virtual workspace, or "scene," is created by means of node-graph architecture, and the scene is displayed based on this network of nodes. Edited scenes can be saved in various formats.

INFO: *http://usa.autodesk.com/maya/*

C++

USED BY: *NEARLY EVERYONE PROGRAMMING VIDEO GAMES*

If you play games, you've almost certainly encountered ones that were programmed in C++. Introduced in 1979, C++ remains one of the most popular programming languages. Companies such as Intel and Microsoft offer numerous versions of the software, some of which are available for free. C++ offers real versatility and is also utilized in hardware design.

INFO: *http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/visualc/aa336395*

PHOTOSHOP

USED BY: *ARTISTS AND ANYONE ELSE MANIPULATING GRAPHICS*

Since its release in 1990, Adobe Photoshop has become the world's premier image-editing software, with products so well known that the word "Photoshop" is now commonly recognized as a verb for retouching a photo. Adobe states that Photoshop has an installed base of more than four million users.

INFO: *www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html*

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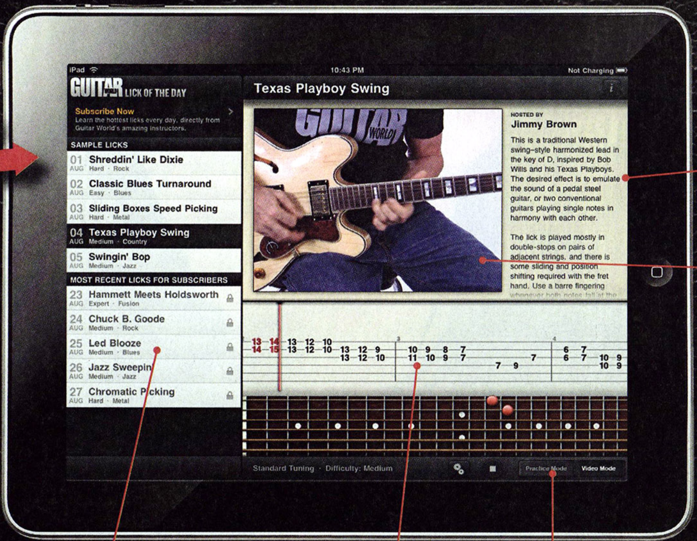
iPad
10:43 PM
Not Charging
GUITAR WORLD LICK OF THE DAY
Standard Tuning · Difficulty: Medium
Practice Mode
Video Mode

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SAMPLE LICKS

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- 02 AUG **Classic Blues Turnaround** Easy · Blues
- 03 AUG **Sliding Boxes Speed Picking** Hard · Metal
- 04 AUG **Texas Playboy Swing** Medium · Country
- 05 AUG **Swingin' Bop** Medium · Jazz

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- 23 AUG **Hammett Meets Holdsworth** Expert · Fusion
- 24 AUG **Chuck B. Goode** Medium · Rock
- 25 AUG **Led Blooze** Medium · Blues
- 26 AUG **Jazz Sweepin'** Medium · Jazz
- 27 AUG **Chromatic Picking** Hard · Metal

Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing–style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering whenever both notes fall at the

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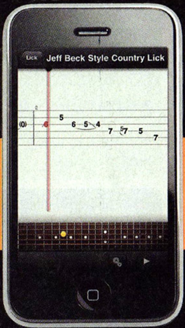

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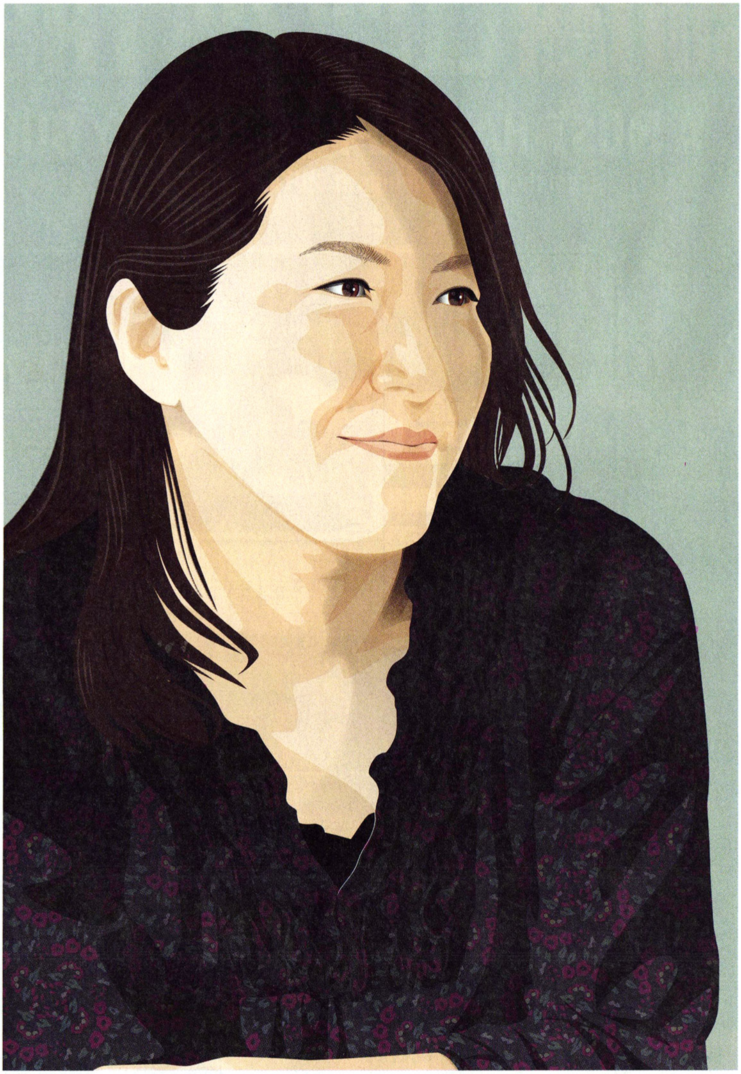
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
October 19, 1967

BIRTHPLACE
Hyogo Prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Music composer/arranger

BEST KNOWN FOR
Composing for the Street Fighter, Kingdom Hearts, and Mario & Luigi series; game tunes you can't get out of your head

FAVORITE FOOD
Sushi, BBQ, pineapple

CURRENT PROJECTS
Final Fantasy Versus XIII

Yoko Shimomura

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Musician Yoko Shimomura began her career at Capcom, submitting tracks for everything from Final Fight to a racy mahjong game. Her soundtracks for the company's Street Fighter series raised her profile considerably, but her heart was elsewhere; with few opportunities to write the classically flavored music that interested her most, she joined Squaresoft in the early '90s. There she defined the sound of such RPG franchises as Front Mission, Parasite Eve, and, most famously, Kingdom Hearts. But the long hours and a desire to work with a wider variety of creators led her to go freelance in 2002. Contrary to the experience of many composers who take that leap into the unknown, Shimomura's career has only flourished; she continues to compose for major Square Enix franchises such as Kingdom Hearts and Final Fantasy, while also finding rewarding work with Nintendo's Mario & Luigi series and, most recently, Atlus's well-received DS RPG Radiant Historia.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become interested in music?

YOKO SHIMOMURA
I think I was around 3 or 4 years old. My cousin was learning piano and I adored it, so I begged my parents to let me learn. But, of course, I wasn't allowed to have my own piano right away. My first instrument was a hand-me-down keyboard.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

You may find this strange, but up through primary school, I always wanted to become a doctor. I was in middle school when I started thinking about becoming a musician.

What are some of your musical influences?

I guess I'd say classical music. Romantic and comtemporary pieces were probably my strongest influcences. My father's record collection also contained flamenco guitar, tango, and Latin music, so I was always fascinated by music with such fantastic ethnicity.

A lot of games in the 1980s and '90s didn't list creators with their given names. What are some of the early games you worked on for Capcom? Was there a pseudonym that you used?

That's true, only pseudonyms were allowed. In the beginning, I was composing background music for prototypes of prize-catcher machines. My first Famicom composition was for a title called Samurai Sword. But I didn't have a particular "creator name." My *senpai* [mentor] and the programmers decided it for me every time. [Laughs] I was also credited with my in-office nickname sometimes.

What was it like getting to work on Super Mario RPG? Do you have any especially fond memories of the experience?

I would say that Super Mario Bros. was the catalyst for my joining this industry, so when I got the project, I was thinking, "Should a musician like me really be in charge of such a magnificient project?!" Of course, I considered it a great honor. So I swore to myself not to disappoint the Mario fans! The planners and graphic designers were also "Mario worshippers" and we would have discussions about our content ideas until midnight. They even implemented a minor idea that I came up with. Normally, musicians aren't involved with production details like that, but the fact that we all shared the same love for Mario made us work as a tight team. The production of that game is a very good memory of mine now.

How did you feel when you were approached to work on the Kingdom Hearts series?

I was like, "Whaaaaat?! I get to compose music for a Disney project?! Really?! Me?!" Yes, as you can see, I don't really have much self-confidence. [Laughs] I was struck by a great sense of insecurity by this request. But I tried my best to create the score with the image of Disney's worlds in my mind.

"Dearly Beloved" from Kingdom Hearts has become quite an iconic tune. How did you come up with this particular piece of music?

Actually, this tune was originally written for a certain event in the game, and I created it instantly, intuitively...and there were no thoughts running through my mind while I was at it. But eventually, the tune was [cut from the game]. And when I was asked to compose something for the title music (they said it could be a temporary song; just give us anything), I proposed "Dearly Beloved." The next thing you know, this tune was chosen to be the title music! Quite a reversal of fortune! [Laughs]

Was it intimidating to work with Disney franchises that already had such recognizable music?

In the beginning I struggled a lot; all I could do was grope around. But one day, suddenly everything came together, like, "Oh! I see it now!" Luckily, I had never received any "no-good" remarks from Disney. I was very happy.

Since the Mario & Luigi titles tend to have such a unique, lighthearted tone, how did that affect the way you composed music for those titles?

I don't think I had to change my composition style too much. I love composing comical or cute tunes, too. I always have questions like "What kind of music would be the best fit for the title?" and "How can I incorporate my style into it?" in my mind when creating music. So my style doesn't really change from title to title.

Which is your favorite of your less-famous works, and why?

I would say that would be an arcade title I worked on during my Capcom years, called Nemo. The NES version [Little Nemo:

GAMEOGRAPHY

Yoko Shimomura has composed the music for dozens of hit games, including all the Kingdom Hearts titles and all three entries in the Mario & Luigi series. She's also worked on games as diverse as Final Fight and Parasite Eve.

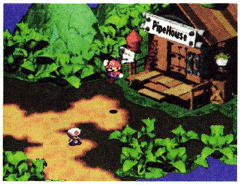
▶たたかう

ファルは うすれてゆく いしきの なか
じぶんの からだが すごい いきおいで
とばされるのを かんじた。
こえ：まずは ひかりのまほうつかいを
さがすがよい。

SAMURAI SWORD
1988, FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
COMPOSER

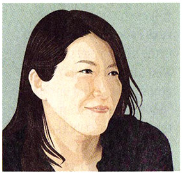
GUILE
KO
96
BLANKA

STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR
1991, ARCADE
COMPOSER



SUPER MARIO RPG: LEGEND OF THE SEVEN STARS
1996, SUPER NES
COMPOSER

LEGEND OF MANA
2000, PLAYSTATION
COMPOSER



The Dream Master] is a little more well-known, but not the arcade version. The soundtrack CD isn't even available, and I don't have the source files either, but I remember most of the songs still.

In the last several years, you've worked almost exclusively for role-playing games. What is it that appeals to you about the genre?
Naturally, I love stories and novels, and therefore I love RPGs as a tool that lets you enjoy something of a "different life." And there are so many subgenres within the genre, I think it's suitable for someone like me who wants to create songs with so much variation. But I don't mean to imply that I only want to work on RPGs.

Do you have any interest in composing for action or fighting games again?
I actually have composed in the genre before (Street Fighter II, some portion of Tobal No. 1) so I don't consider RPGs as my only genre. If I get the opportunity, I would definitely want to tackle them again.

How did you get involved with Radiant Historia? How closely did you work with them from that point on?
One day, I suddenly got an email from Atlus and I was immediately interested in it. So I met them in person and next thing you know, I was on the project. They didn't give me any specific requests; it was just like, "We'll let you do the thing you do best." I don't know what qualifies as "close collaboration," but right after I was hired, I visited the development team and actually played the work-in-progress game, and went through as much of the scenario and graphical assets as possible. I didn't have frequent meetings with them, but I was sure that as long as the game world didn't go through any drastic changes that I could deliver something solid for them to go with on the title.

How does it feel to have your music performed by touring orchestras around the world? Are you involved in the arrangements and song selections?
I grew up with classical music and I loved orchestration, so it is like a dream come true for me. I'm truly happy. I leave the arrangement details to them, basically, and I only give my opinions when they request permission to use specific instruments.

You've become much more prolific in recent years, composing for several games per year when you used to do one or two. How has your process changed?
Actually, it's been quite hard. [Laughs] It really was hard work, but each and every one of the titles was something I devoted myself to entirely, so I have no regrets. I had a lot of titles released last year, but it's not like my work was overlapping, or that I had no time to rest. In fact, knowing that I didn't have any time to waste, I decided to take a trip in order to refresh my mind... which resulted in an even tighter schedule. This may have caused trouble for developers, and for that, I'm deeply sorry. The first few years after I became an independent was the most important period, I believe. It's a time to test your limits. But from this year on, I'm aiming to take fewer titles and to take more time on them.

> *"...I love RPGs as a tool that lets you enjoy something of a 'different life.'"*

What aspect of composing for video games do you enjoy the most?
When I'm thinking about what music will fit a particular scene, and suddenly I get struck by, "Oh! I've got it! This is what would fit the scene best! Yay!" That moment brings me incredible joy.

Do you play video games? If so, what other games, game creators, or game composers do you most admire or respect, and why?
I haven't had much free time recently, but I've been playing every Dragon Quest title, and I play them to the end, completely. I also like the board-game genre, with games like Momotaro Dentetsu and Itadaki Street. I deeply enjoyed Style Savvy last year.

As for game creators, thanks to Smash Bros. Brawl, a project we worked on together, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Masahiro Sakurai (Kirby, Super Smash Bros.) and from time to time, I still get to talk to him. He surprises me with each conversation we have. His brain is filled with ideas that no ordinary man could conceive of. He is truly extraordinary.

As game composers go, as I've always said, I'd pick Mr. Koji Kondo (Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda). His music showed me the joy of game music, and he's the reason I wanted to pursue this job.

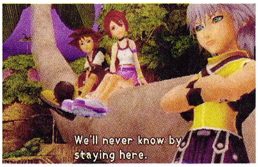
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I like the mystery genre in literature. I especially like female writers' works and I like reading them frequently. A writer named Setsuko Shinoda writes many stories involving music. Her work shows the joy and pain of musicians, and I simply get drawn into it.

I'm also a big fan of shojo manga (girls' manga). At one time, I had about 1,000 books in my house. I'm a shojo manga otaku.

What is your favorite hobby outside of music?
Shopping and travel. Especially travel. I don't think I could even compose without traveling. That's how important it is to me.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
Definitely teleportation. Wouldn't it be wonderful? You feel like going somewhere tropical, and in the next moment, you're standing there! [Laughs]

GAMEOGRAPHY



KINGDOM HEARTS
2002, PLAYSTATION 2
COMPOSER

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA
2003, GAME BOY ADVANCE
COMPOSER

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
2008, Wii
ARRANGEMENT SUPERVISOR FOR "TETRIS: TYPE A," "GRITZY DESERT," AND "KING DEDEDE'S THEME"

RADIANT HISTORIA
2011, NINTENDO DS
COMPOSER

The Story

Professor Juniper gives Pokémon Trainer Black a Tepig and launches him on a training journey to fill his Pokédex with data about the mysterious Unova region Pokémon.

Elsewhere, Pokémon Trainer White is coping with the demands of her career as the manager of a troupe of performing Pokémon.

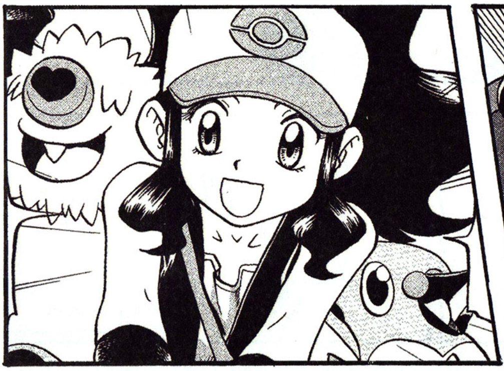
When Black and White's paths cross, Black helps White by solving a crime and White hires him as her assistant.

What interesting new Pokémon—and people—will the two discover on their travels...?

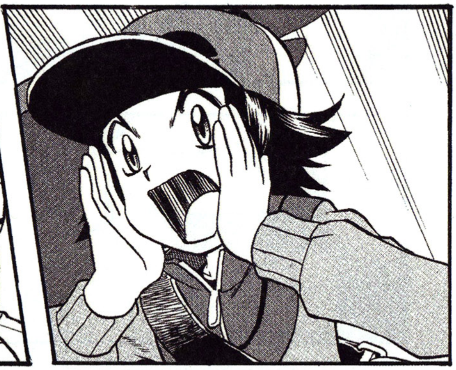
Pokémon™
BLACK AND WHITE

Manga Preview

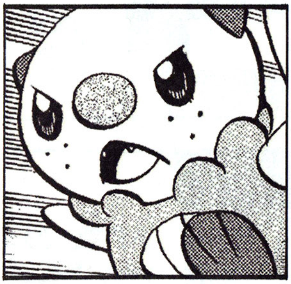
Note: Manga pages read right to left



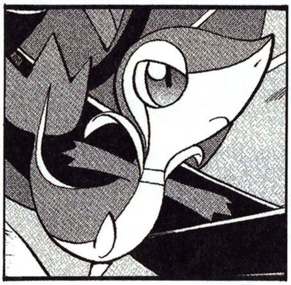
White's dream is to make her Tepig Gigi a star!



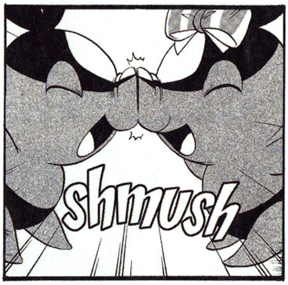
Black's dream is to win the Pokémon League!



In response to an attack,
Oshawott retaliates immediately.



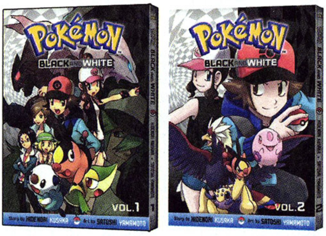
Being exposed to lots of sunlight
makes Snivy's movements swifter.



Black's Tepig, Tep, and White's
Tepig, Gigi, get along like peanut
butter and jelly!

Don't miss the awesome adventures in the manga series *Pokémon Black and White!*

Meet Pokémon Trainers Black and White and Pokémon Snivy, Tepig, Oshawott and many more Pokémon of the unexplored Unova region.


Pokémon
BLACK AND WHITE
VOL.1
Story by Hidenori Kusaka
Art by Satoshi Yamamoto
Pokémon
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Story by Hidenori Kusaka
Art by Satoshi Yamamoto

Pokémon Black and White

Story by Hidenori Kusaka, Art by Satoshi Yamamoto

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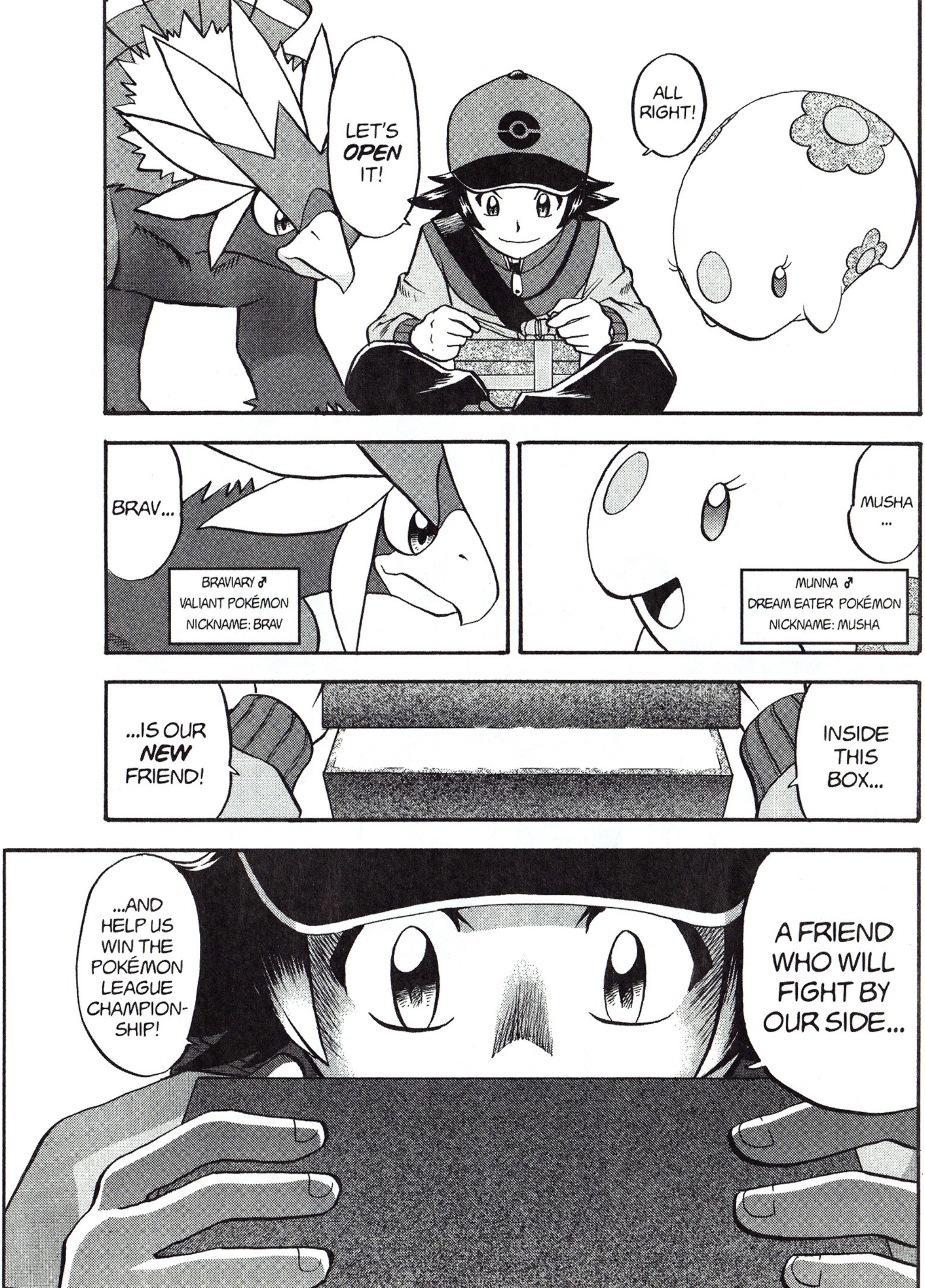
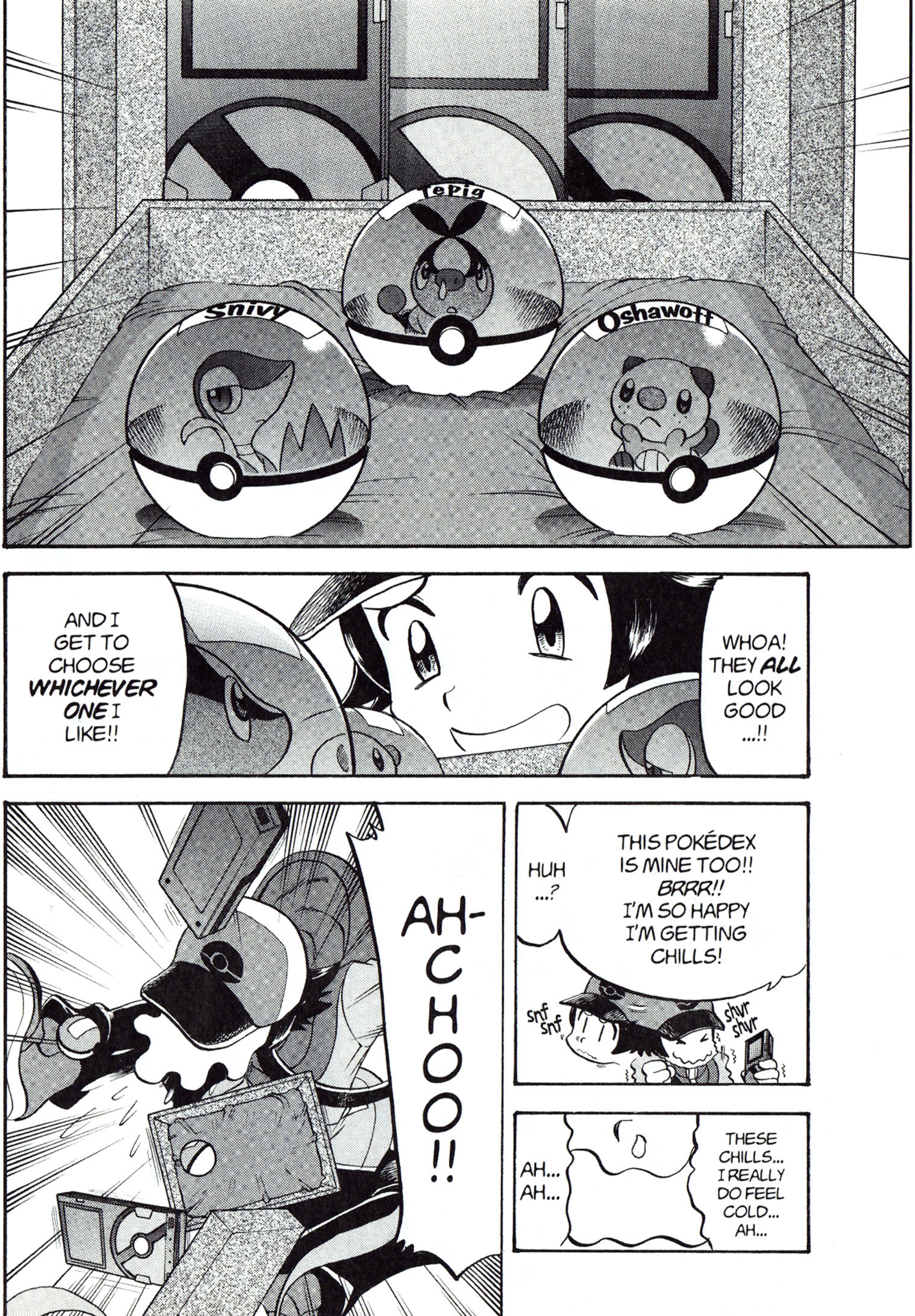
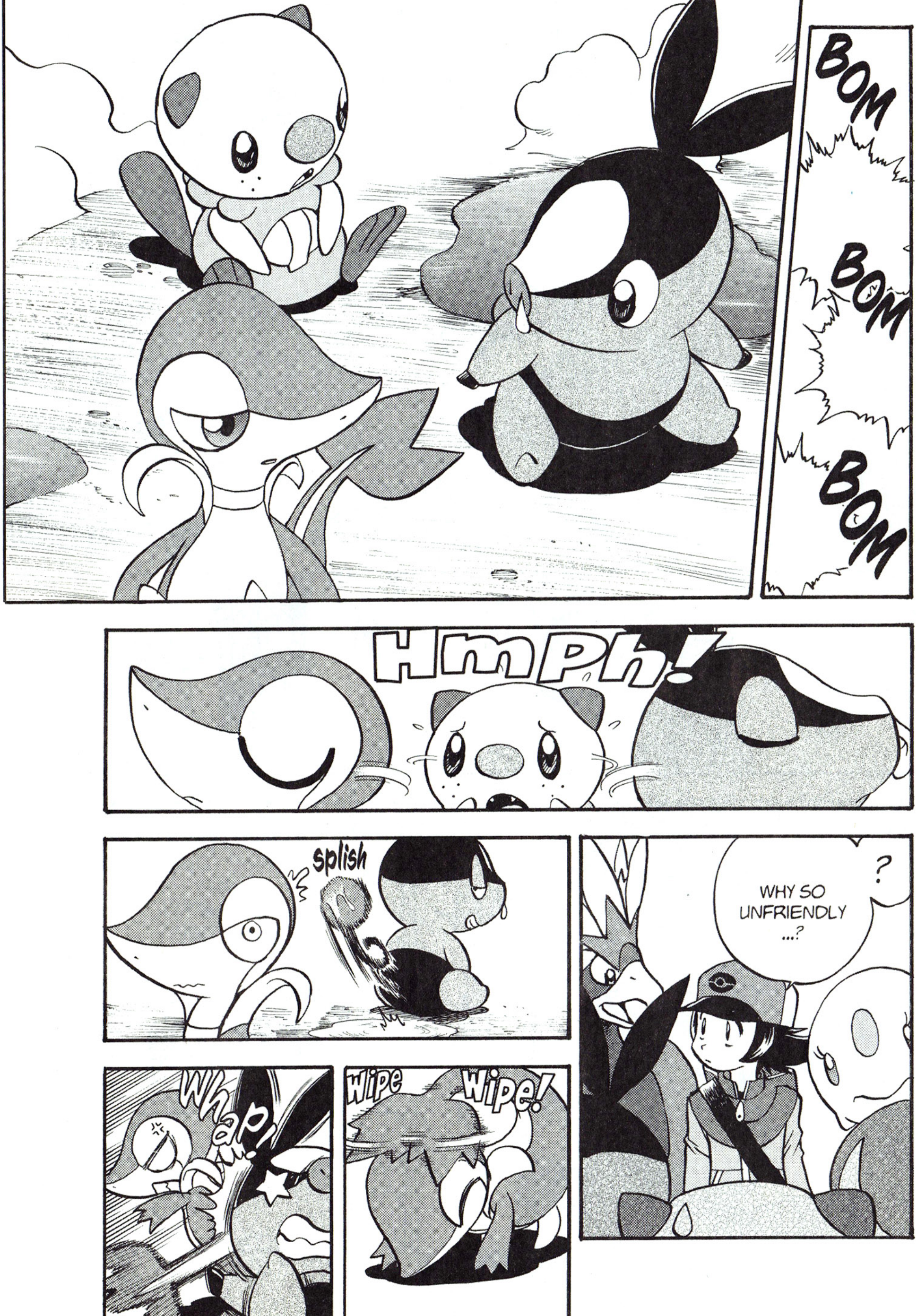
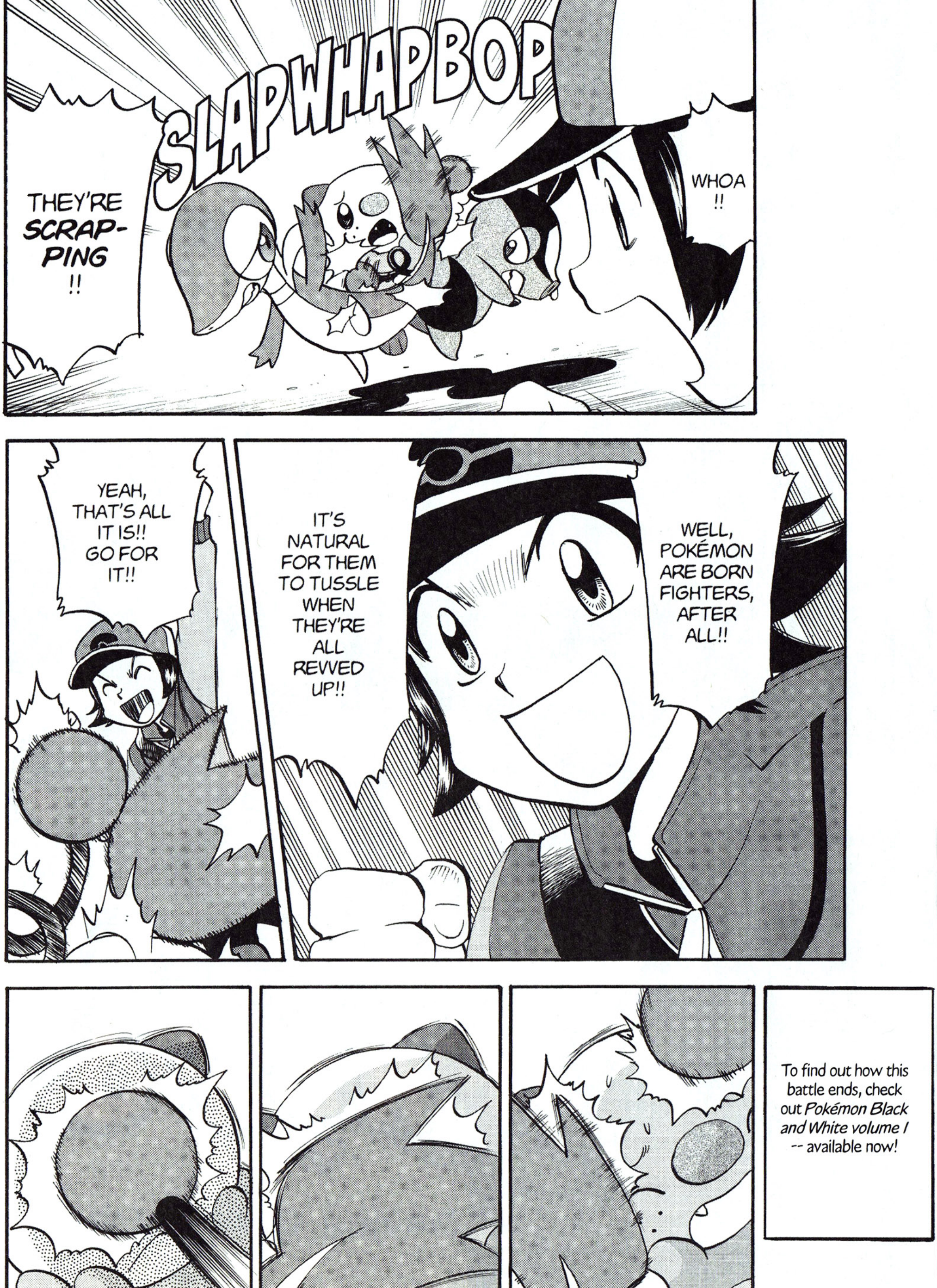
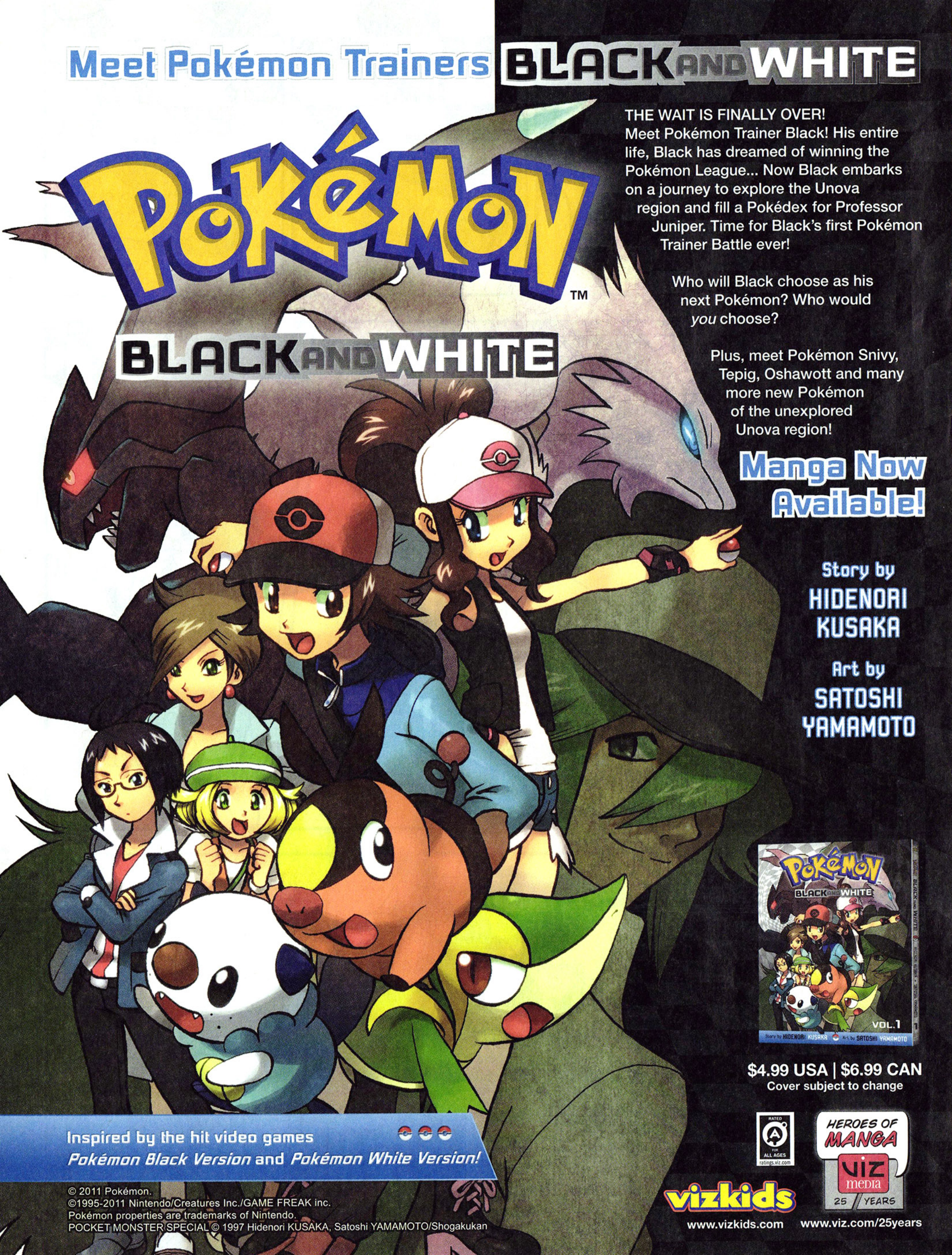

ALL RIGHT!
LET'S *OPEN* IT!
MUSHA...
MUNNA ♂ DREAM EATER POKÉMON NICKNAME: MUSHA
BRAV...
BRAVIARY ♂ VALIANT POKÉMON NICKNAME: BRAV
INSIDE THIS BOX...
...IS OUR *NEW* FRIEND!
A FRIEND WHO WILL FIGHT BY OUR SIDE...
...AND HELP US WIN THE POKÉMON LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP!


Tepig
Snivy
Oshawott
WHOA! THEY ALL LOOK GOOD ...!!
AND I GET TO CHOOSE WHICHEVER ONE I LIKE!!
THIS POKÉDEX IS MINE TOO!! BRRR!! I'M SO HAPPY I'M GETTING CHILLS!
HUH ...?
shvr shvr
snf snf
THESE CHILLS... I REALLY DO FEEL COLD... AH...
AH... AH...
AH-CHOOO!!


BOM
BOM
BOM
Hmph!
splish
Whap!
Wipe
Wipe!
WHY SO UNFRIENDLY ...?
?


SLAPWHAPBOP
WHOA!!
THEY'RE SCRAPPING!!
WELL, POKÉMON ARE BORN FIGHTERS, AFTER ALL!!
IT'S NATURAL FOR THEM TO TUSSLE WHEN THEY'RE ALL REVVED UP!!
YEAH, THAT'S ALL IT IS!! GO FOR IT!!

To find out how this battle ends, check out *Pokémon Black and White volume 1* -- available now!


Pokémon™
BLACK AND WHITE
POKéMON BLACK AND WHITE
VOL.1
Story by HIDENORI KUSAKA Art by SATOSHI YAMAMOTO
RATED A FOR ALL AGES
ratings.viz.com
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Because Jess plays video games the ESRB (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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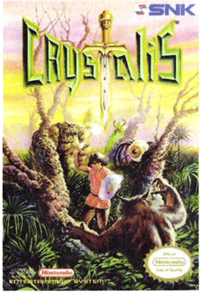
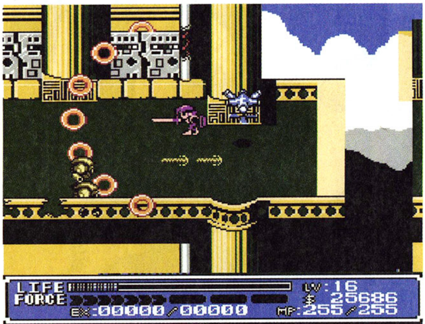
www.ESRB.org

Crystalis

The world ends 14 years ago. Everyone mark your calendars.



PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **SNK**
DEVELOPER: **SNK**
RELEASE DATE: **JULY 1990**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 29, 31, 33, 59, 60, 87, 100**
DAYS SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION: **4,979 (AND COUNTING)**



Even in the ultra-high-tech flying-zap-gun-robot future, a little purple guy with a magic sword can save the day.

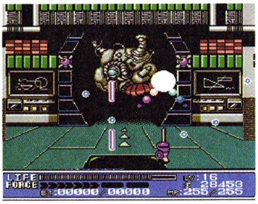
SNK never made a game like this again. That's true of more than just Crystalis, though. Before the company launched the NeoGeo and began focusing on quarter-munchers, it gave us a bunch of odd one-offs. Athena was a beautifully murderous platformer; Baseball Stars was a groundbreaking sports sim; and Crystalis was an action-RPG that could hang with the best on the NES.

In Japan Crystalis had the awesomely bombastic title God Slayer, even though (strictly speaking) no gods are slain in the course of the adventure. The story's a cracker either way. Crystalis is a rarity for its time, a proto-Fallout post-apocalyptic RPG, set hundreds of years after The Bomb went off (on October 1, 1997, for those counting). When our hero hops out of a cryogenic storage tube, he has no voice, no name, and no identity, and the quest for his origins leads to a few sharp surprises about the world's future history.

Along the way, four elemental swords become his weapons. Each blade powers up through three successive levels; for instance, with the Sword of Wind, charging up to level one shoots a little piercing wind bullet, level two shoots a bigger one, and level three launches a screen-filling wave of tornadoes. The swords are tools as well as weapons, much as in Square's Final Fantasy Adventure. The Sword of Fire burns down frozen walls; the Sword of Water creates frozen bridges across rivers.

Not every bit of design was so polished or prescient, however. The quest layout is very late-'80s—which is to say it's confusing as heck. (Crystalis was a regular star of the Counselor's Corner column in old-school Nintendo Power.) Combat has some not-so-well-thought-out spots, too. NES Max owners quickly discovered that rapid-fire buttons made some battles cakewalk-easy.

Weighed against everything going for the game—fresh world-building, fine graphics, madly frenetic action—the flaws don't add up to much. It's only a shame that SNK never took the chance to fix them with a sequel. **—DAVID S.**



Giant bugs shall inherit the earth!

OUT OF THE TUBE TOO SOON

FORCE
HP: 047/080
MP:031/051

SNK didn't revisit Crystalis, but Nintendo Software Technology did. Nintendo's American development shop created a Game Boy Color version in 2000, hoping to bring the game to a younger generation.

Sadly, the remake isn't one of the brighter lights in the NST lineup. It was only the fledgling team's second project, and it showed some growing pains.

Many of the revival's problems come down to technical limitations: a shorter view distance and a cut-down GUI take a lot of the fun out of combat, and there was nothing to be done about the screen resolution of the Game Boy Color. The other major problem seems due to head-scratching decision making, though: the story is drastically simplified, missing a lot of the original's cool sci-fi feel, and it's hard to imagine why. Perhaps NST tackled this one too soon—a few years later, the Nintendo DS could have done the classic justice.

FORCE
HP: 255/255
MP: 255/255

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REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

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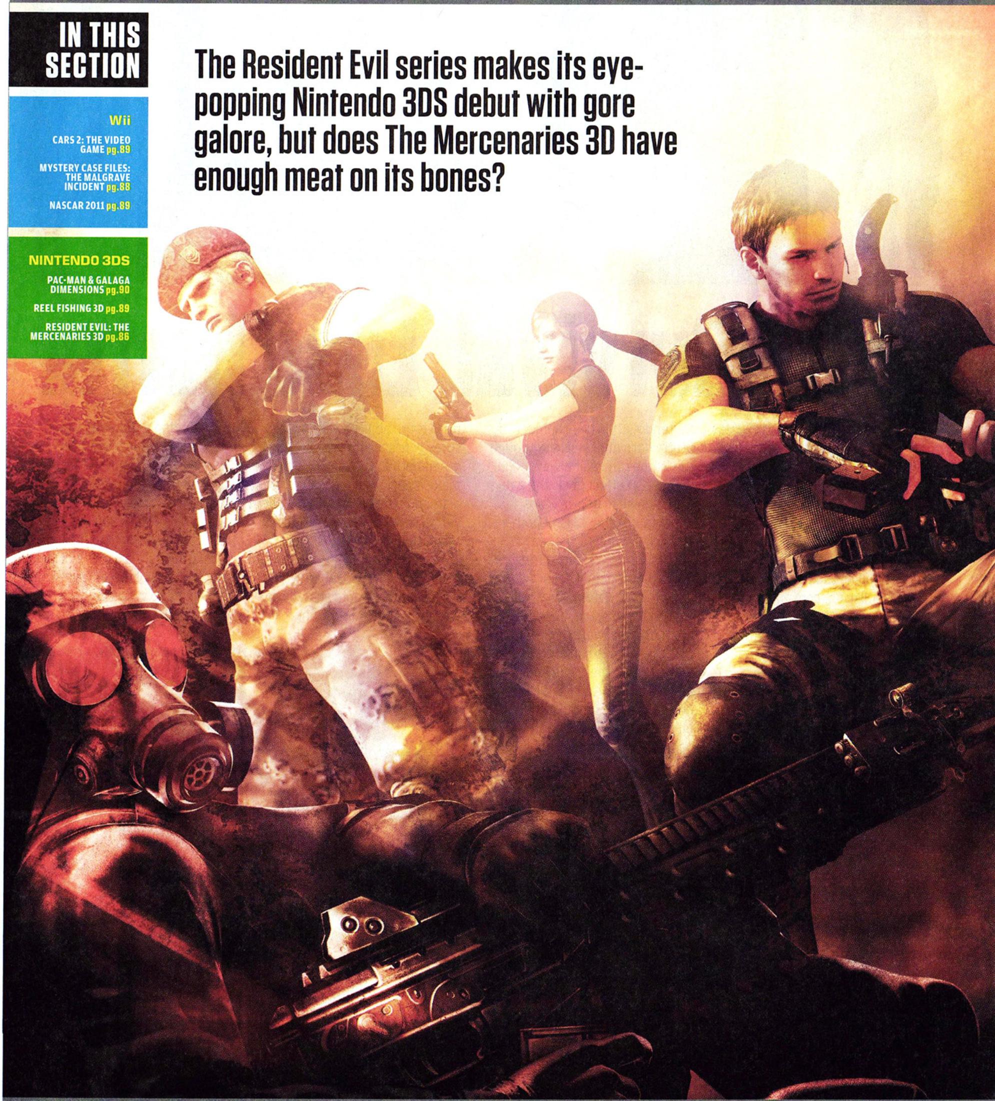
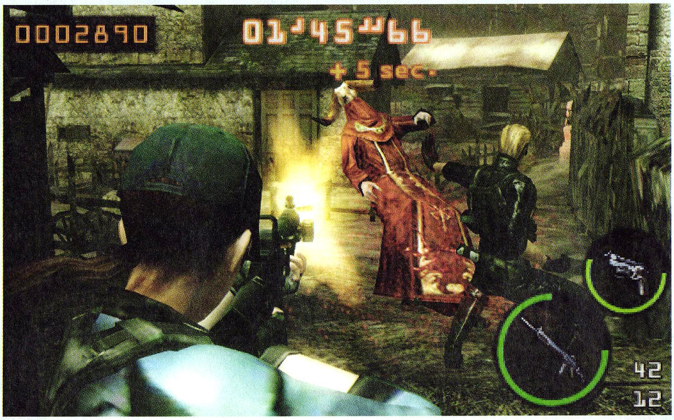
REEL FISHING 3D pg.89

RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D pg.86

The Resident Evil series makes its eye-popping Nintendo 3DS debut with gore galore, but does The Mercenaries 3D have enough meat on its bones?





More Survival, Less Horror

RESIDENT EVIL: THE MERCENARIES 3D

RATING: 7.5

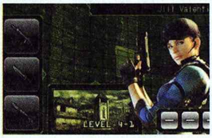
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **MATURE**

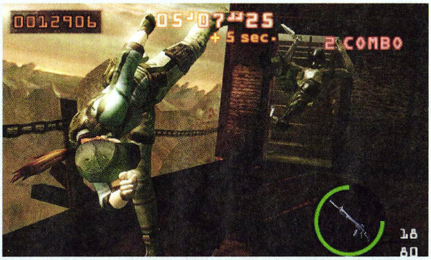
It's heartening to see a major publisher like Capcom embrace the Nintendo 3DS system the way it has, putting two of its premier franchises on the handheld within a relatively short time frame. Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition was easily the best launch title, and now there's a new Resident Evil in the N3DS library—Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D.

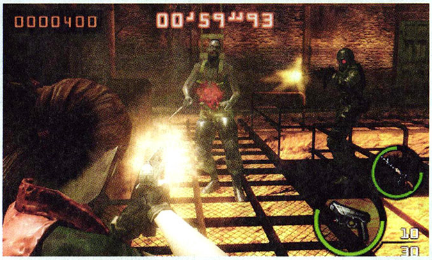
Well, The Mercenaries 3D isn't exactly *new*; it's essentially an expanded version of The Mercenaries mode from Resident Evils 4 and 5. It has you choosing one of eight Resident Evil characters—Chris Redfield, Jill Valentine, Rebecca Chambers, Claire Redfield, Hunk, Barry Burton, Jack Krauser, or Albert Wesker, each with a distinct arsenal of weapons—and slaying as many ganados/majini as possible within a time limit. The novelty obviously stems from the fact that it's on Nintendo 3DS. The graphics are pretty darn impressive (although the frame rate isn't always solid), and the 3D effect gives the game a nice sense of depth. More importantly, the 3D isn't bothersome; I had the 3D slider at its maximum setting the entire time I played, and I never felt the need to turn it down.

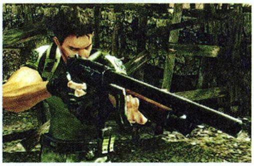
The controls, too, benefit from the N3DS hardware; it's easy on the thumb to run around and aim with the Circle Pad, and it's a snap to swap weapons by tapping on the icons on the touch screen. Another helpful change in the controls from previous Resident Evil titles is the ability to tap A to spray yourself with liquefied green herbs. Not only does it make it easier to heal your character, but you can also run while you're spraying. Less helpful is the option to move and shoot. Sure, you can walk around while firing your weapon, but it would be great if you could actually *aim* while moving and shooting.

Defeating as many enemies as possible is the crux of The Mercenaries 3D, but there are a few other things to keep in mind. You're graded after every mission, and because you need at least a B to advance to the next level (there are a handful of missions in each of the six levels), it's important to get as high a score as you can. This means executing







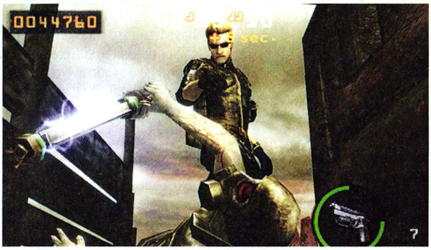


baddies in quick succession to build up a combo, and managing your time. Typically you have around two minutes, but you can find breakable red columns that add more time to the clock; you also earn extra time whenever you kill an opponent with a melee attack. This means you have to use some strategy when dispatching the not-zombie hordes; ironically, that limits how you play the game. Your best bet is to aim for an enemy's knees, which stuns him, then run up and unleash a melee attack. Doing this repeatedly throughout the game's 30 missions can get monotonous.

The variety of bad guys that are thrown at you as you progress farther into the game helps keep you engaged. Some foes have body armor or shields, forcing you to change tack a bit. Strong adversaries who can take and dish out more punishment—sometimes even killing you with one hit—will rear their ugly heads, too, which changes things up drastically, as you go from dominating the opposition to fleeing from it. In order to survive these encounters, it behooves you to arm yourself with up to three skills from a pool of 30 that grant you abilities such as reducing the amount of damage you take and enhancing your weapons' effectiveness.

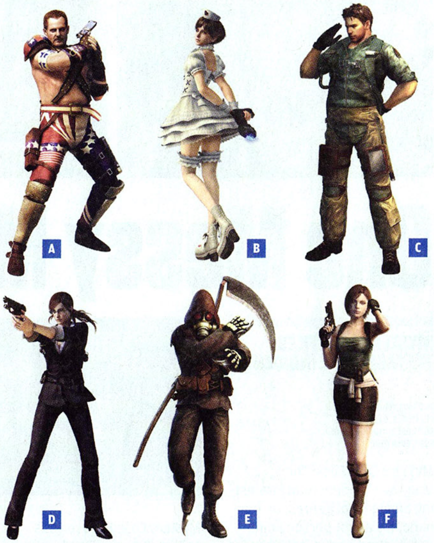
Your chances also improve if you have a skilled buddy by your side—that way you can make short work of the baddies. With a rookie partner, you may wind up babysitting out of fear of having to restart the mission, as it's game over if you or your pal kicks the bucket. Still, playing cooperatively—either online or via local wireless—alleviates the repetitiveness for only so long. This is clearly a title that is meant to be played in short bursts.

If you manage your play sessions wisely, Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D can be entertaining—it is, after all, plain fun to shoot and stab monsters with an array of weapons. And as a Resident Evil fan, I appreciate that this game provides characters, locales, and enemies I'm familiar with. I just wish I didn't feel so overly familiar with the gameplay by the time the credits rolled. **—JUSTIN C.**

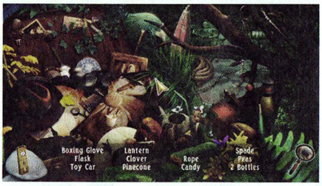


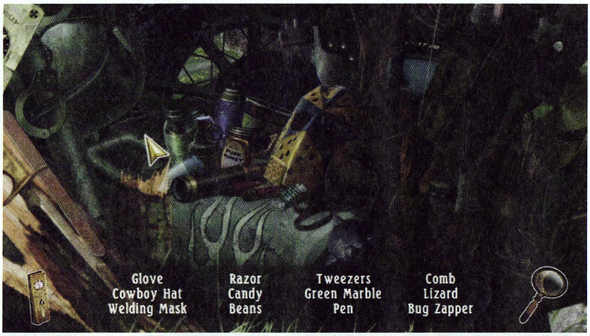
Dressed to Kill

One of the best parts of Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D is each character's unlockable costume. Check out some of these new—and in one case, old—looks.



A: Barry is a real American. **B:** Hello, nurse Rebecca! **C:** Chris wants to fly. **D:** Shooting bad guys is serious business for Claire. **E:** Hunk's cosplay is grim. **F:** Jill's impractical ensemble returns. (Not shown: Krauser and Wesker.)





[Above] Man, the last time I lost a lizard in a pile of weapons, it me took forever to find it.

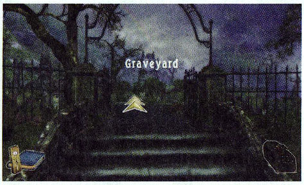
One Messy Mystery

MYSTERY CASE FILES: THE MALGRAVE INCIDENT

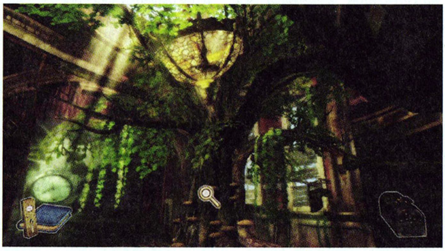
RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **BIG FISH GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident is an interesting amalgam of genres. On one hand, it's a first-person point-and-click adventure title (similar to the PC classic Myst) in which you must solve puzzles by using certain items or by deciphering in-game clues; on the other, it's a game about using your powers of observation to locate dozens of hidden objects in room after messy room.



Although the hidden-object-finding segments are the Mystery Case Files series's calling card, they're also the weakest part of the game. Admittedly, there is some appeal to scavenging through the well-drawn 2D environments, especially considering the sheer weirdness of some of the objects you're searching for (a beard?!), and it can be satisfying to discover an object that's hidden in a particularly clever manner. However, the rewards are minimal and the activity quickly becomes tiresome—it kinda feels like you're looking for where you left your keys—especially when you must revisit the same area more than once. It even occasionally becomes annoying due to multiple foreground and background layers in each environment that often result in key objects being hidden from view. (The most irritating is a monocle, which is not only hidden by the parallax backgrounds, but is almost invisible even when taken on its own.) Fortunately, additional players can join in to lend a hand, and if you get really fed up you can ask for clues that point out objects' approximate locations (although doing so is extremely unfulfilling).



Phone
Stringed Toy
Marble
Woodblock
Golf Club
Newspaper
Deer
Bow Tie
Whistle
Treble Clef

Other aspects of the game fare better. The setting, Malgrave Island, is a fairly big place, and there are plenty of locations to explore, each containing their own riddles. Every time you successfully complete an object-finding segment, a new item is added to your inventory, and in true adventure-game fashion, these objects are used to solve said riddles. A lever can be used to activate a machine; a special book must be placed on a bookshelf; a magnifying glass lets you set something on fire. There are also a variety of puzzles (sliding tiles, for example, or manipulating chemical vats to obtain a specific amount of liquid) embedded in the environment to spice things up. Similar to the puzzles in the Professor Layton titles, each one provides a unique, interesting challenge. In addition, the intriguing story keeps you guessing for most of the adventure.

If the puzzles and plot do hook you, though, you'll still have issues to contend with: the entire game suffers from slightly unresponsive controls, a snooze-inducing pace, and a relative lack of challenge. Even a four-player versus mode (focused purely on finding hidden objects) doesn't add much extra appeal. Despite a few high points, you can safely file this game under "not bad, but entirely skippable." —**CHRIS H.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

THE NINTENDO eSHOP IS NOW LIVE. WHAT TITLES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE COME TO NINTENDO 3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE?

JUSTIN CHENG

The Game Boy Color version of Metal Gear Solid. It's been a decade since I last played that game, and I've been looking for an excuse to replay it.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I'd really like to get my hands on Shantae for Game Boy Color. I didn't buy the game when it was first released, and now it's impossible to obtain.

CODY MARTIN

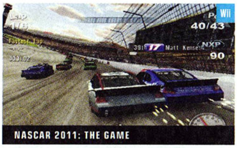
Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins. It was my first Game Boy title as a wee lad, and I'd love to revisit it on the Nintendo 3DS to stomp Wario once again.

CHRIS SLATE

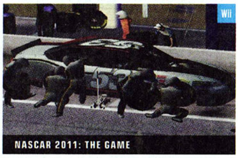
I always wanted to check out the original Game Boy Wave Race, and I *really* want to tackle Kid Icarus: Of Myths and Monsters, especially now that Pit's comeback adventure is on its way to Nintendo 3DS!

STEVE THOMASON

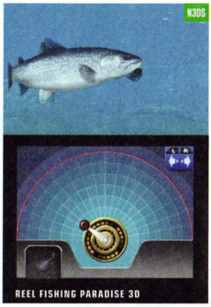
I'm not the biggest fan of those old handhelds, but I'd love to finally play Shining Force: Sword of Hajya from Sega's Game Gear.



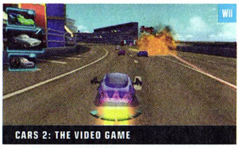
NASCAR 2011: THE GAME



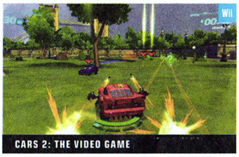
NASCAR 2011: THE GAME



REEL FISHING PARADISE 3D



CARS 2: THE VIDEO GAME



CARS 2: THE VIDEO GAME

NASCAR 2011: THE GAME

RATING: 3.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **EUTECHNYX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The first NASCAR racing simulation on Wii, NASCAR 2011: The Game, isn't firing on all cylinders. Certainly no winner in the graphics department, this game doesn't seem to get anything else right, either. In fact, it's the pits. Sloppy handling, zero car customization, dumb-as-rocks opponent AI, and a generally abbreviated features list are just a few of the many problems plaguing this clunker, which tries to deliver some realism with drawn-out pit stops and ridiculous-looking victory celebrations. No matter how big of a NASCAR fan you are, expect to be let down by this game. Watching the real thing on TV is far more entertaining—and less expensive. **—RANDY N.**

REEL FISHING PARADISE 3D

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **NATSUME**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Natsume's latest entry in its Reel Fishing series seems to have a great setup for a good fishing experience: peaceful music, serene locales, plentiful fish, a mentor with a rockin' beard, and a home base awesomely dubbed "The Aqua Lodge." However, the fishing expedition itself is rather plain, and the game's repetitiveness makes things dull quickly. You pick a location, choose your bait/tackle, cast your line, and reel when a fish bites—over and over again. The controls aren't cumbersome and the fishing is fairly uncomplicated, but once you've hooked a fish, continually holding the reel buttons is more a challenge of your patience than a test of your skill. Yes, you can catch up to 40 different types of fish, but most of your missions are essentially the same. In fact, some simply task you with catching bigger versions of the same fish. Other than customizing your aquarium, there isn't anything to break up the action, either—the game is just pure fishin'. We recommend a catch-and-release approach to Reel Fishing Paradise 3D; it probably isn't destined for your trophy wall. **—CODY M.**

CARS 2: THE VIDEO GAME

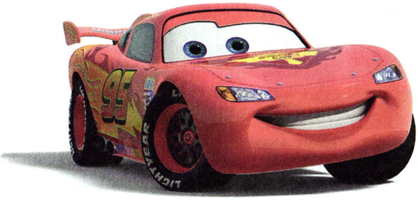
RATING: 7.0

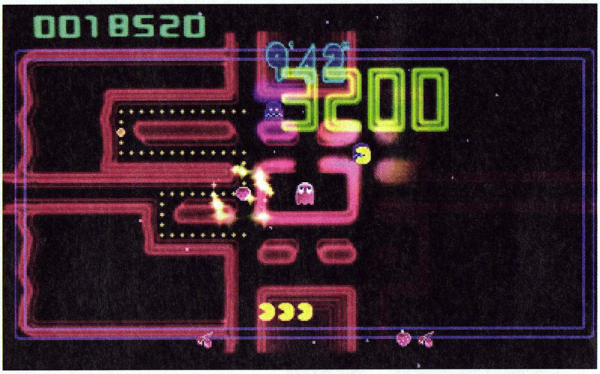
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **AVALANCHE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

I admit that I didn't expect much from Cars 2: The Video Game. A licensed title—based on a film targeted toward children, no less—doesn't usually inspire confidence. I'm very happy to say that I was wrong. This kart-racer-style game has solid looks and gameplay.

Expanding upon the international-espionage idea introduced in the *Cars 2* film, the Cars 2 game has you assuming the roles of various Cars-universe characters who have joined the spy organization known as CHROME (Command Headquarters for Reconnaissance Operations and Motorized Espionage). So it makes sense when characters such as Lightning McQueen and Mater grab power-ups in the style of Mario Kart Wii and blast their opponents with machine guns and missiles. And like Mario Kart Wii, Cars 2 is at its best when you're playing with pals. The multiplayer—which supports up to four participants—helps make everything from the Battle Race missions to the Twisted Metal-style Hunter missions a lot more fun than when you're playing by yourself.

Regardless of whether you're playing with friends, be sure to play Cars 2 with a Classic/GameCube controller or with the Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk combo. The game supports a remote-only scheme—wherein you hold the remote an NES controller—but the motion controls lack precision, and the button configuration is less than ideal. **—JUSTIN C.**





What's Old Is New Again

PAC-MAN & GALAGA DIMENSIONS

RATING: 7.0

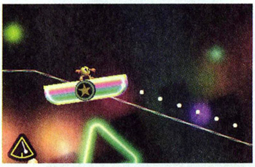
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Pac-Man and Galaga are both 30 years old now, so chances are good that you've played one or both of these games before. However, that doesn't mean you should skip Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions. Not only does this Nintendo 3DS title have 3D-ized versions of the original Pac-Man and Galaga games, but it also features the techno-infused Pac-Man Championship Edition and Galaga Legions, as well as the motion-controlled Pac-Man Tilt and Galaga 3D Impact.

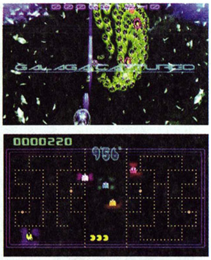
The original Pac-Man and Galaga are not the biggest draws here, but the two classics are still fun enough three decades years later. The 3D effect is decent—Pac-Man and the ghosts seem to pop off the screen, for example—but everything feels awfully small when these games are shrunk down to fit on the N3DS screen.

More exciting than these favorites from yesteryear are Pac-Man Championship Edition and Galaga Legions. Like the original Pac-Man, Pac-Man CE has you munching on pellets and avoiding/eating ghosts. What sets this game apart from its precursor is the emphasis on racking up as many points as you can in a 5- or 10-minute time limit. It's a welcome change of pace from the traditional Pac-Man experience, and playing Pac-Man CE actually made it difficult for me to go back to playing the classic Pac-Man. Whereas Pac-Man CE retains many of the gameplay elements from the seminal Pac-Man, Galaga Legions almost feels like a different kind of game than Galaga. Granted, you're still shooting waves of insectoids, but now you can see the path they'll take before they appear on the screen. This makes it easier for you to dispatch them using your two shooting satellites that can be placed anywhere and pointed in any direction. You move your ship with the Circle Pad and place the satellites up, down, right, or left by pressing the X, B, A, or Y Button. This gives the game a layer of strategy, as you can take out your opponents before they even get near your ship.

Pac-Man CE and Galaga Legions are certainly fun, but they are ports of games that were originally released in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The two brand-new titles in Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions are Pac-Man Tilt and Galaga 3D Impact. Unfortunately, those titles are not nearly as good as games released three to four years ago. Pac-Man Tilt is a 3D-less side-scrolling puzzle-platformer in which you tilt the world to help Pac-Man reach collectibles and the end of each of the 25 stages. This sounds OK, but the platforming proves to be frustratingly imprecise. Galaga 3D Impact is also irritating, but mainly because there's so much fire coming your way. Because you're on rails you can't dodge it, so you have to aim and shoot before the baddies can get a shot off. This means either physically moving the N3DS system to aim your reticle (which means you're best off deactivating the 3D effect) or targeting opponents with the Circle Pad. Neither solution is perfect, but I'm glad the developers didn't force you to use the motion controls.



Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions certainly offers quantity—we haven't even mentioned the short CG animated Pac-Man film that is also included on the Game Card—and, for the most part, it offers quality. It's not for everyone, but Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions is certainly worth checking out if you haven't tried Pac-Man Championship Edition or Galaga Legions yet. **—JUSTIN C.**



Galaga Legions and Pac-Man CE are the reasons to play this game.

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

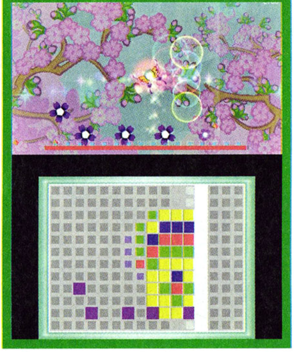
Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Video Game	7.0	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
Conduit 2	7.5	Sega	266	T
Create	5.0	Electronic Arts	262	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Deca Sports 3	4.5	Hudson	261	E
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DJ Hero 2	9.0	Activision	262	T
Donkey Kong Country Returns	8.5	Nintendo	262	E
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 11	8.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
FlingSmash	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Flip's Twisted World	6.0	Majesco	260	E
GoldenEye 007	8.5	Activision	262	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	8.0	MTV	261	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	4.0	Electronic Arts	262	T
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Kirby's Epic Yarn	8.5	Nintendo	261	E
Kung Fu Panda 2	2.5	THQ	268	E10+
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	257	E10+
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E10+
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	4.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	5.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	260	T
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Michael Jackson: The Experience	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
MySims Skyheroes	7.5	Electronic Arts	260	E10+
Namco Museum Megamix	5.0	Namco Bandai	261	E
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	4.5	Tomy	262	E10+
NBA 2K11	6.5	2K Sports	261	E
NBA Jam	9.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
Pac-Man Party	4.5	Namco Bandai	262	E10+
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Rango	5.0	Paramount	266	E10+
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Rio	4.0	THQ	267	E
Rock Band 3	9.0	MTV	261	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Samurai Warriors 3	6.0	Nintendo	260	T
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	7.0	Capcom	261	T
Sid Meier's Pirates!	8.5	2K Games	260	E10+
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
Sonic Colors	9.0	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	8.0	Activision	260	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.0	THQ	266	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	8.0	LucasArts	261	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Swords	5.0	Majesco	260	T
Thor: God of Thunder	5.5	Sega	267	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters	8.5	Electronic Arts	266	E
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	6.0	Ubisoft	262	T
Top Spin 4	7.0	2K Sports	266	E
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Virtua Tennis 4	8.0	Sega	267	E
Wii Party	7.5	Nintendo	260	E
Wii Play: Motion	7.5	Nintendo	268	E10+

MORE ON:

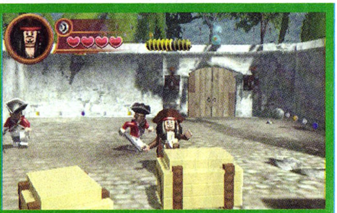
DREAM TRIGGER 3D

Although its multitask-heavy gameplay is challenging to get the hang of, arcade-shooter-inspired Dream Trigger 3D makes for some chaotic fun. You build up your ship's power and reveal enemies by drawing on the bottom screen (which is the game's radar). Then you defeat the visible enemies by holding down a shoulder button and running them over with the Circle Pad. It's a complicated formula, but once you get used to it you'll be hooked. Just don't give up after you fail to beat the first stage. —CODY M.



MORE ON:

LEGO PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE VIDEO GAME



The load times are annoying and the game lacks some of the levels that are present in the Wii version, but I still like the Nintendo 3DS edition of LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean more than its Wii sibling. The graphics are leagues better, and the smaller levels help make the game feel more focused. —JUSTIN C.

Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE All Stars	6.5	THQ	266	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	7.5	THQ	262	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	5.0	Atari	261	E
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Crafting Mama	7.0	Majesco	261	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game–Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	8.5	Altus	260	E10+
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	8.0	Square Enix	260	E10+
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	8.0	Nintendo	262	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	6.0	Natsume	258	E
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.0	XSEED	259	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kung Fu Panda 2	4.5	THQ	268	E10+
The Last Airbender	7.5	THQ	257	E10+
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	7.5	Warner Bros.	267	E
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E
Lufia : Curse of the Sinistrals	8.0	Natsume	260	E10+
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	7.5	Nintendo	262	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Monster Tale	8.0	Majesco	265	E
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	5.0	Tomy	262	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	9.0	Aksys	262	M
Okamiden	8.0	Capcom	265	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions	9.0	Nintendo	265	E
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	7.0	Nintendo	260	E
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	9.0	Nintendo	260	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	7.5	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Radiant Historia	8.5	Atlus	265	E10+
Rango	7.0	Paramount	266	E
Rio	5.5	THQ	267	E
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	6.0	Aksys	258	T
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	8.5	Natsume	262	E
Sonic Colors	7.5	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	7.0	Activision	260	E10+
Super Scribblenauts	8.5	Warner Bros. Interactive	261	E
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	267	E10+
Transformers: War for Cybertron	7.0	Activision	258	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Asphalt 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	266	E10+
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II	8.5	Aksys	268	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	7.0	Crave	267	E10+
Cubic Ninja	4.0	Ubisoft	268	E
Dead or Alive Dimensions	9.0	Tecmo Koei	267	T
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	9.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.5	LucasArts	266	E10+
Madden NFL Football	6.0	Electronic Arts	266	E
nintendogs + cats	7.5	Nintendo	266	E
Pilotwings Resort	8.0	Nintendo	266	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection 3D	7.0	Crave	268	E10+
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D	6.5	Ubisoft	267	E
Rayman 3D	8.0	Ubisoft	266	E
Ridge Racer 3D	8.0	Namco Bandai	266	E
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles	7.0	Tecmo Koei	266	T
The Sims 3	7.0	Electronic Arts	266	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.5	THQ	267	E
Steel Diver	8.0	Nintendo	266	E10+
Super Monkey Ball 3D	7.5	Sega	266	E
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition	9.0	Capcom	266	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars	8.0	Ubisoft	266	T
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	5.5	Ubisoft	267	T

MORE ON:

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME 3D

It pretty much goes without saying that a 3D-enhanced version of one of the best games of all time is going to be a must-buy. A graphical face-lift makes Ocarina of Time 3D look far better than the N64 original, and the gameplay has only improved with age. I do have two minor gripes, though: Navi is more useless than ever, and the save system should have been modified for portable use. Since I'm more likely to play a handheld game in short bursts, I wish I could continue from the exact location (or at least somewhere close to) where I saved. —CHRIS H.

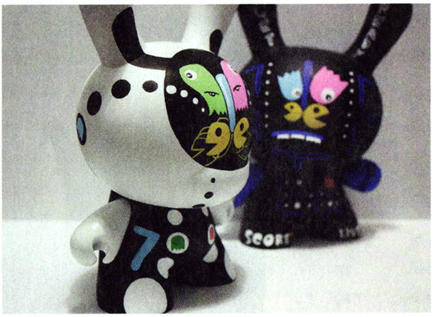
MORE ON:

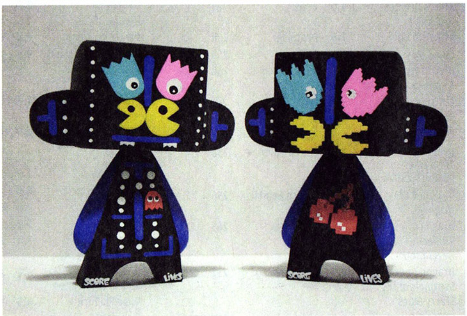
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 3D EDITION

I haven't kept up with the Street Fighter series very well in recent years, but Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition offered the perfect chance for me to jump back on board. It captures the classic SF feel beautifully, and has just enough depth to keep things interesting without overwhelming casual fighting game fans. My one complaint is the new character Rufus, who is just gross. —CHRIS S.

ALL SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

COMMUNITY





FANDOM

Vital Vinyl

Starkly original takes on some one-of-a-kind characters

JOSE SANCHEZ has been customizing vinyl toys for about three years, transforming the (sometimes blank) exteriors of the figures into terrific original creations and wild interpretations of characters like Wolverine, Hello Kitty, Batman, and SpongeBob SquarePants. But what really caught our eye are these excellent takes on video game icons such as Link (from The Legend of Zelda) and Mega Man, plus characters and gameplay elements from Pac-Man.

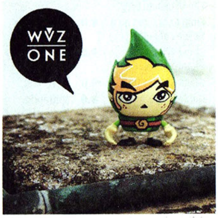
Sanchez, who is based in Seville, Andalusia, Spain and produces his work under the name WuzOne, says he was introduced to the world of customized action figures through magazines about graffiti artwork. "My first contact with the art toy world was through graffiti," explains Sanchez. "In the graffiti magazines, it was common to see pictures of customized toys, so it just was a matter of time (and money too) before I began to collect and then customize them myself."

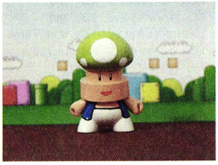
His undeniably one-of-a-kind takes on the classic games and characters seen here draw clear inspiration from the original works, but bear what the 27-year-old psychology student describes as the core tenets of his designs, which are "intensity of colors, clean lines, and good vibes."

Some custom-figure masters prefer working with one type of canvas, but Sanchez has customized a wide variety of figures, including Kidrobot's popular Munny, Mini Munny, and Dunny lines; Coarse's Paw toy; and Munky King's Possessed figurine, which was created by popular artist Luke Chueh. Sanchez uses several tools—including acrylic and spray paints, sculpting clay, and markers—to transform each original creation or blank toy into his own unique work.

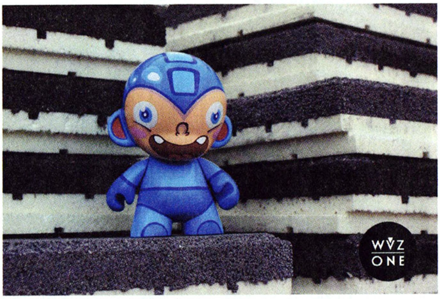
While some of his creations offer colorful takes on familiar heroes or are commissioned by fans of his work, Sanchez says the Pac-Man toys served a slightly different purpose. "I consider Pac-Man a contemporary icon and always wanted to paint him," he explains. "Not only did I want people who see it to remember the game, but I also wanted to [draw inspiration from] the first time I played the game. I had fun painting it."

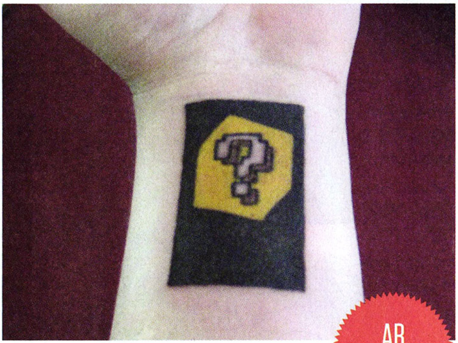
Sanchez doesn't have any gaming-inspired toys in the works at present, but says he hopes to "paint for many years, continue to meet people from around the world, and improve everyday." All admirable goals from an impressively skilled artist. —**ANDREW H.**





We've seen customized vinyl toys before, but we haven't seen many that are as distinctive as these.





AR FOREVER!

FANDOM

Inky Homage

This guy has playable body art.

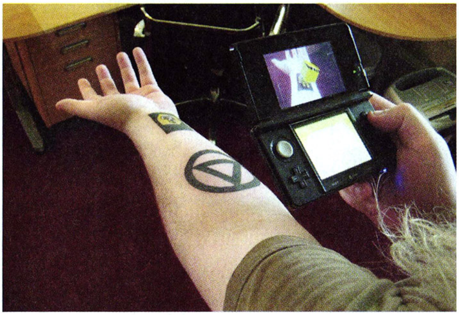
YOU MAY LOVE your new Nintendo 3DS system, but we're willing to bet money that Orin Shepherd has you beat in expressing that devotion. Within days of getting his N3DS and playing with the AR Cards for a single hour, he dashed out to a tattoo parlor and got an AR Card inked onto his left forearm.

"I had so much fun with the games that I immediately wanted to get the tattoo," says the 32-year-old Cary, North Carolina, resident. "I figured it's the 21st century; people should have tattoos that do more than just look pretty."

And it certainly is more than an attractive piece of arm candy: the handheld flawlessly projects three-dimensional moving images on Shepherd's arm. "Everyone was quite impressed with the outcome," says the committed fan about the Blue Flame Tattoo staff.

Still, Shepherd is thinking of going back to get the tattoo fine-tuned, specifically to further define the edges of the arm-card so the handheld can better perceive it in the light. But this much is certain: he won't ever get it removed.

"Hopefully when I'm really old, things like AR will be so common that it won't be a big deal to show off the old-school awesomeness to my grandkids." **—DAVID W.**



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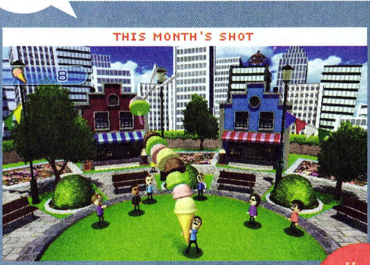
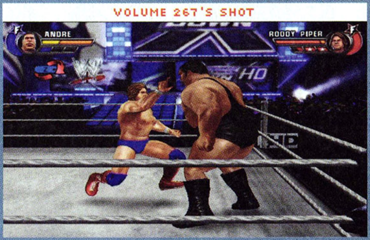


Whosoever holds this cone, if he be worthy, shall get way too much ice cream.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?



"Piper soon realized that you can pick your nose and you can pick your friends, but you *can't* pick your friend's nose." **—LUNAR WINGS**

"This is the wrong game for Jedi mind tricks." **—NICK D.**

"If you want to learn sign language, you have to do it *my* way! And that means wearing tights here in the ring. Let's begin the basics: A…B…C…." **—JACE V.**

"No matter how hard Roddy Piper tried to be like Sonic, he would never get any faster." **—GUSTOUGHSON**

"Not only does it make you look fat, but it makes your head look tiny!" **—POKÉFAN**

"Dude, this is a wrestling ring, not a dance floor." **—SETH P.**

"You got a little bit of cupcake on your nose from Hulk Hogan's party." **—SOUPINACUP96**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SELECT
START
X
Y
A
B

AUGUST 2011 VOL. 270

NEXT MONTH

Your diligent NP detectives will continue to dig up the dirt on the future of Nintendo gaming, plus we'll take a trip back in time to celebrate yellow capes, green buddies, and purple buttons in our Super NES 20th-anniversary bash! Whether you're old-school or new-school, next issue will have every Nintendo fan covered.

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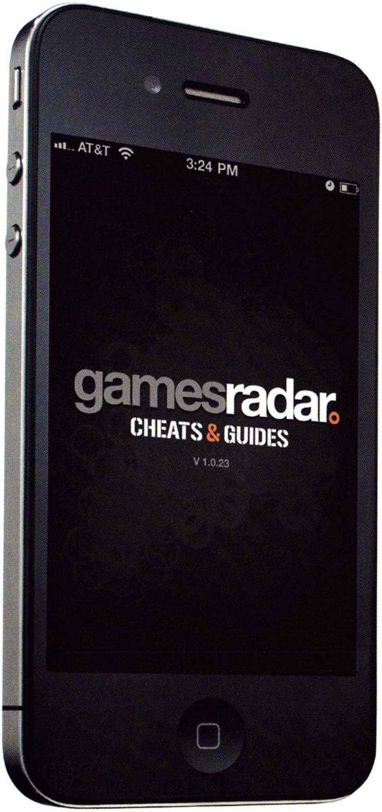

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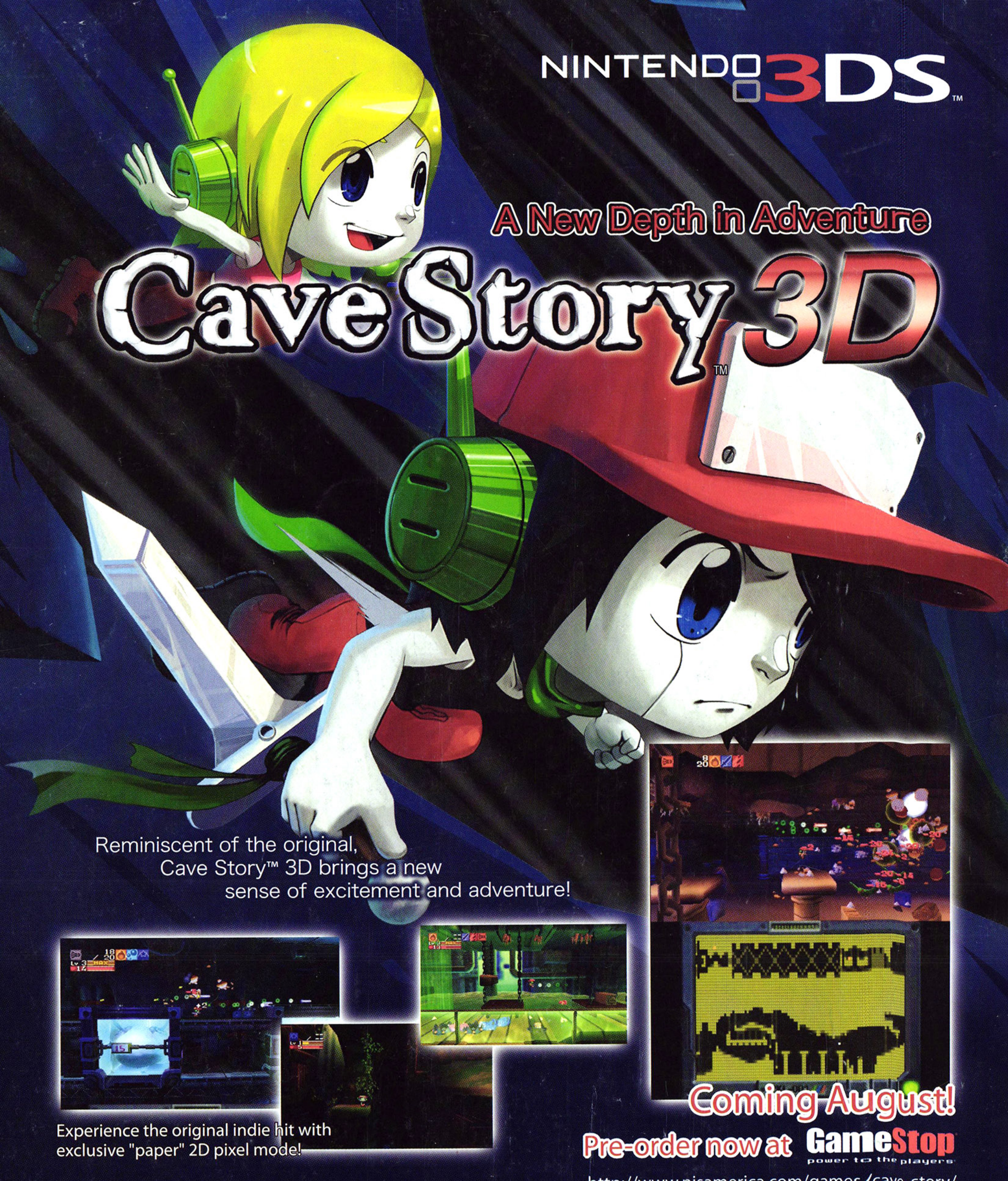

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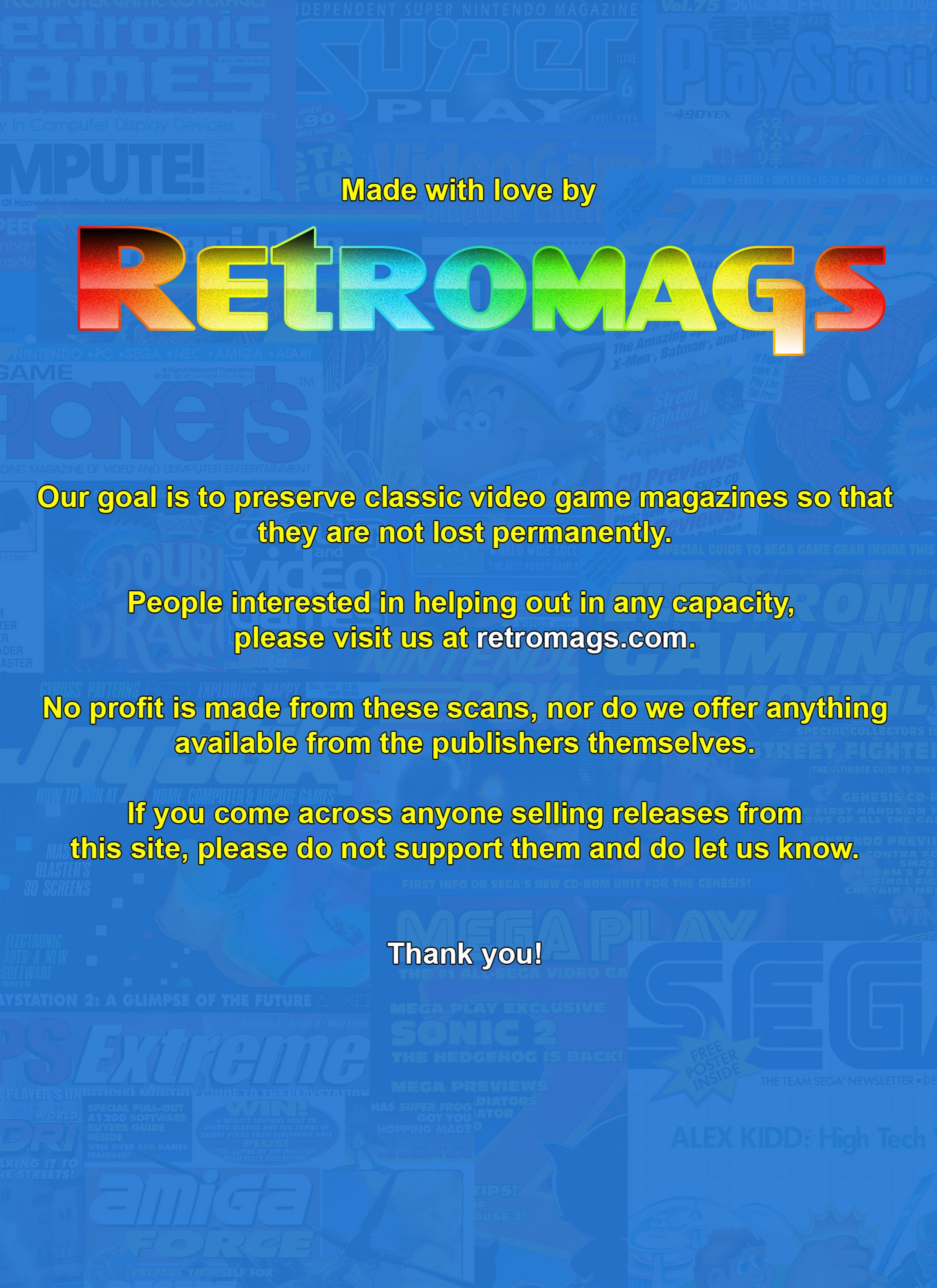

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